



OUR CHURCH:  
*A Manual*  
FOR  
MEMBERS AND PROBATIONERS  
OF THE  
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

BY THE  
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AUTHOR OF "THE BIBLE CHRISTIAN."

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## Introductory Note.

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THE author of the following work is an estimable minister in the Florida Conference of the M. E. Church, South. He is favorably known as the author of a valuable book entitled "The Bible Christian." His health having failed so that he cannot prosecute his regular pastoral labors, he wishes to eke out his ministry by the use of his pen. He is a man of catholic spirit, and is devotedly attached to the Church at whose altars he has efficiently labored. The present little treatise will be found very serviceable to pastors in making their members, and those who are candidates for Church



membership, acquainted with the doctrines and discipline of the Church, and the privileges and responsibilities of those who are within its pales.

**The Editor.**

NASHVILLE, TENN., Jan. 23, 1860.

## Preface.

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I AM well aware that the minister of Christ who faithfully performs the duties of his office has but little time for writing books; but he who has learned to economize time may save a few moments for this work. John Calvin, Richard Baxter, and John Wesley could hardly be accused of neglecting their ministerial duties, and yet in the midst of their arduous labors they found time to write many books which are full of pure and great thoughts. Indeed, the faithful minister finds it necessary to seek the aid of good books in his pastoral labors, and when he cannot find such as he needs,

he must write them. The pastor without books to circulate is destitute of an important element of power. Books remain when he is gone, and address the mind and heart long after his voice has ceased to be heard. Against him there may be prejudices growing out of his appearance, his manner, his voice, his habits, or his history; but against the book there are no prejudices. There it is, calm, quiet, still: it speaks when there is no one you can reply to or argue with, and you must listen to its truths. Take the books with you by all means, if you would accomplish the greatest amount of permanent good.

The present work is intended to meet a want which the author has long felt in his pastoral labors, and of which other pastors have complained. Our people are not sufficiently well acquainted with

our doctrines, government, and usages, and with what is expected of Methodists; nor are they well prepared in most cases to defend our system. This is a growing evil, and is leading to serious results. Too often we find objections to some of the most important parts of our economy, and hear very vague and erroneous ideas of our doctrines expressed. Then again we receive thousands into the Church who greatly need just such a work as this is designed to be. From year to year we have large classes of probationers, who form a most interesting portion of our membership, but for whose wants no provision has heretofore been made, and they do not even understand the relation they sustain to the Church. Many of these, from the want of proper attention and instruction, are never received into full connection, and are lost

to us ; and too often, alas ! lost for ever. The Discipline requires a formal reception into full connection, but prescribes no form, nor gives any direction as to the manner of doing it. Hence there is not only no uniformity among us in the manner of receiving them, but often a very great want of propriety. To remedy this, the author has added a form which he submits to the wisdom of his brethren.

The little book is sent forth with the earnest prayer and the humble hope that it may be useful.

TO  
THE MEMBERS  
OF THE  
*Florida Annual Conference,*  
WITH WHOM  
THE AUTHOR HAS FOUND A HOME,  
AND EXPECTS TO FIND A GRAVE,  
THIS LITTLE WORK  
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.



# OUR CHURCH.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

MAN is made for society, and his nature demands it. It is as natural to form social relations and habits as it is to eat and drink. However much men quarrel with society, they nevertheless remain in it, and enjoy it. And when persons, from mistaken views of religion, "leave the world," to shut themselves up in some cloister, they only change one form of society for another. The hermit forsakes society, but it is only when soured in spirit, disappointed in life, and misanthropic in feeling. Nature, when not perverted, always seeks society. This is



the constitution which God has given us for wise purposes; and we are always happier in following the direction of nature.

“Unhappy he, who from the first of joys,  
Society, cut off, is left alone  
Amid this world of death!”

Who has not felt the solace and experienced the sweet joys of social life? It lightens our burdens, soothes our anxious minds, relieves our cares, and inspires confidence, courage, and strength in the great battle of life. Many a brave hero has been made such by the examples before him, and the encouragement of those around him.

Society is a great school where we can best study human nature, can see the working of Divine Providence, and receive the benefit of contact with all classes of mind.

“Man in society is like a flower  
Blown in its native bud. 'Tis there alone  
His faculties expanded in full bloom  
Shine out, there only reach their proper use.”

This social principle is the foundation of all great works and enterprises. "It is not good for man to be alone," for he is weak, and unequal to the great schemes which his mind can form. But associated with others, governments are organized, great cities are built, commerce springs up, and arts and sciences flourish, while vast works everywhere attest the value of the social principle. Christianity employs this principle, and gives to men the Church of Christ.

The Church is a *Divine* institution, organized to aid and encourage those who sincerely desire to be religious, and to carry the gospel to all nations. It is built upon the foundation which the prophets and apostles pointed to as the only ground of human hopes, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Rock of Ages, and our chief Corner-stone. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," constituted the apostolic confession of faith, and the rock on which Christ is building his glorious Church, against which the gates of hell

cannot prevail. The true Church of the past, of the present, and of all time, is therefore one, and claims but one head, one door, and one foundation, Jesus Christ, who is the Head, the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. The members of the Church must be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The Church is therefore a Divine, and the most ancient institution; and it becomes the duty of every man to enter its sacred enclosure, and there work out his salvation with fear and trembling. It is the garden of the Lord, where he cultivates his plants of righteousness; the vineyard of Christ, where he dresses and watches over the tender vines; the fold, where he guards his sheep and leads them forth in green pastures and beside

still waters; the school, where he trains his disciples for the great future; and the family, where he disciplines his children, under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the Father. By his ministers he goes out early in the morning of life, at the third, at the sixth, the ninth, and the eleventh hours, and calls to men everywhere, "Why stand ye here all the day idle? Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." By his ministers He comes to all men, saying, "Follow me." It is therefore the duty of every person to become a member of the Church; for to remain out of it is rebellion against God, whose institution we neglect, whose command we disobey, and whose provision for our spiritual improvement we disregard. To remain out of the Church is no small matter, but a sin of great magnitude; because we offend God, set an example of evil character before others, and give a direction to our influence by which it operates against the

highest duties and best interests of our race.

The Church of God stands with the best and purest of all ages and nations enrolled among her members, presenting an array of holy men and true, without a parallel in all the world.

The work of the Church is sublime. She has an army of many thousand missionaries laboring in almost every country under heaven; a still larger army of holy ministers who devote themselves to the noble cause of human salvation; another army of Sunday-school teachers, who are sowing in young hearts the precious seed of heavenly truth; and various other armies engaged in education, in Bible and tract distribution, and in temperance reform and philanthropic labors. These great works require annual contributions from the Church, which amount to vast sums, besides what is given to the poor and needy around us. The world has never seen any other such benevolent and working organization. It is carrying

light and hope and life to all nations, and making the wilderness bloom and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. Not to join this working host, and enter this sacred temple, is to commit a double sin—a sin against God and against humanity; and, I will add, a sin against yourself.

But perhaps you will say, “What Church shall I join? There are so many sects, each claiming to be the true Church, that I am bewildered, and know not which is ‘the Church of Christ.’” The Church of Christ has never been one organized body; but always one in spirit and aim, and composed of various branches. The New Testament frequently speaks of “the churches.” There was the Church of Jerusalem, the Church of Corinth, the Church of Ephesus, and others.

In later days the larger metropolitan churches assumed a jurisdiction over the smaller village and town churches; and

still later, the Roman Church aspired to the distinction of the universal Church, and claimed to be the only true Church of Christ. But this claim has never been universally allowed. Its arrogant and antichristian character has ever met with a rebuke from some quarter; and the Greek or Eastern Church never did submit to the Church of Rome.

At the glorious Reformation of the sixteenth century this boastful claim was repudiated, and met a bold and firm protest, which has been maintained to this day. The great doctrine of Luther and of Protestantism is that no one body of men can rightfully claim to be the exclusive Church of God, and proceed to condemn others who hold the doctrines and practice the virtues of religion. The *unity* of the Church is spiritual: the outward form of the Church admits of various organizations. There is one root sending up many trees, no one of which can claim exclusive connection with the

root. There was one Jewish Church, but there were twelve tribes, each of which had an equal right to worship at the altar of God. This is the result, not of any imperfection in the Divine plan, but of a wise adaptation to our condition and wants. It is not the design of God to prescribe rigid rules, and schools of exercise for the body or the mind; but, with various modes given us, he leaves us free to follow just where the mind naturally inclines. There is the same liberty in religious matters. We are not fettered and bound in iron to any particular system, but left to enter whatever organization may appear best suited to our spiritual improvement. The Spirit does not confine his influence to any one system, and least of all to those self-styled "only true" Churches; and we should stand fast in the liberty which God has given us. These denominations are the result of our condition, and are means to an end. They are for our encouragement and aid



in securing our salvation, and doing good. It is our business, therefore, to see which will likely aid us most, and with which we can most cordially unite and agree.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE METHODIST CHURCH.

IF the principles we have adverted to be correct, it becomes necessary in joining any Church to be satisfied with regard to its scriptural character, and the doctrines which it teaches. For while there may be different denominations of true Christians, there are doubtless some which have the "form, but deny the power of godliness," from whom we are directed to "turn away." When there is only the "name" of Christian, and the body is "dead," we are not safe a moment in such a sect.

The Methodist Church claims nothing on the score of age. It came into existence long since the age of general corruption in the Church, and after the

period when professing Christians were persecuting and anathematizing each other, and is therefore free from these sad spots which darken the history of nearly all the other denominations.

Nor does it pretend to any fabled line of succession. We find no promise of such succession, nor any allusion to it, in the New Testament; and indeed we place no value upon a succession that cannot be traced otherwise than through the seditious, murderous, adulterous, and abominably wicked bishops of the Middle Ages. Such a line is a disgrace to those who claim it; and if their Church depends on it, I do not hesitate to say that it builds upon a rotten foundation. The idea that the bishops of the Middle Ages—the bishops of the Roman Church—were in any religious sense successors of the apostles, is preposterous and ridiculously absurd. No: we claim to be a true Church upon other grounds.

The Methodist Church is the child of Divine Providence, raised up and sus-

tained amid universal opposition, and blessed with unparalleled success by the great Head of the Church. The Spirit of God called the Wesleys into a higher region of spirituality, and caused them to burn with a greater desire of usefulness, than was common in their day. They stood alone in their religious experience and zeal, but not long; for while the Church did not understand nor sympathize with them, but condemned and persecuted them, a few gathered around them requesting advice and assistance. What could they do? They dared not do otherwise than receive them and instruct them, not for a moment imagining whereunto this thing would grow. They could not be still: the Spirit moved them powerfully to go out everywhere preaching the gospel of the grace of God; and wherever they went they met opposition from the clergy and the rabble, and success in winning souls to Christ, who, in their turn, were persecuted likewise. What could they do now? These young

converts must be taken care of, or left unprovided for, to return again to their sins. The Church would not and could not provide for them, because they were alive, and the Church was dead. The Church only persecuted them. Mr. Wesley then of necessity had to make some provision for their spiritual oversight. The Society at Bristol having been divided into companies for the purpose of raising money to defray a chapel debt, it was thought advisable that the members of each class, as it was called, should meet weekly at a certain place; and when together the members spoke of their experience, and engaged in singing and prayer. Appreciating the advantages of such meetings, under the conduct of judicious leaders, Mr. Wesley introduced them into all his societies. This was the origin of *Methodist Class-meetings*.

To do the greatest amount of good, and to attend to the calls of the people in various places, they found it necessary to travel from place to place, preaching

daily the unsearchable riches of Christ. This was the origin of *Itinerancy*.

To plan the work and consult about various matters arising in their labors, as well as to make arrangements for spreading the gospel in other places, where they were invited to go, they met together once a year. This gave rise to *Annual Conferences*.

In the same providential way every part of our system was developed: nothing was contrived beforehand, but every thing was brought about by a most wonderful series of providences. Methodism is, therefore, not the work of man, but of God. Mr. Wesley did only what the providence of God pointed out, and Methodism gradually grew up.

At the time of the American Revolution, the Episcopal clergy, being mostly English and royalists, retired from their churches, and left the people without the sacraments. The Methodists were then quite a large body, with a supply of preachers; but they were unordained,

and could not administer the sacraments to their people. What should be done? Mr. Wesley could do but one thing: convinced that bishops and presbyters, or elders, are the same order, and originally had the same right to ordain, and that this was an emergency that could be provided for in no other way, he ordained Dr. Coke, and sent him to America to ordain Mr. Asbury and others. Mr. Wesley was a presbyter in the Church of England, and so was Dr. Coke; and moreover he was assisted by other presbyters. He was satisfied that bishops and presbyters, or elders, were originally the same order, and had the same right to ordain, which is the great Protestant doctrine, and is sustained by the Scriptures, the fathers, the reformers, and the evangelical divines of the Church of England. The case was one of emergency. The English bishops would not ordain his preachers, the American Protestant Episcopal Church was not then in existence, and he judged it necessary

to exercise the right of a presbyter and ordain his preachers. Their success had already fully shown that they were "chosen and ordained" by Christ; and having *his ordination*, they were in a high sense ministers of the gospel, and the laying on of a bishop's hands could not make them ministers in a higher sense.

But Mr. Wesley ordained Dr. Coke a bishop, or superintendent. He believed that a bishop and an elder are of the same order, and that a bishop is only an elder set apart for certain duties which appertain to general oversight, which might be performed by the elders, but are assigned to certain of them called bishops. Bishops and elders are the same in order, and the distinction is in the distribution of the work, certain elders being, for convenience, made superintendents of the work generally. This is Methodist Episcopacy; and Mr. Wesley never dreamed of creating any other. His ordination of Dr. Coke was no more than solemnly investing him



with the authority which he (Mr. Wesley) exercised, and sending him to exercise it in America. Hence, when the enemies of Mr. Asbury represented in letters to him that Asbury claimed to be a bishop in the arrogant sense of High-Churchism, he wrote too hastily condemning him for allowing himself to be called a bishop in any such sense. Had he waited to learn the true state of the matter, he would not have so written, for he said in a letter to a friend, "I firmly believe I am a scriptural *episcopos* (bishop) as much as any man in England or Europe. For the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove."

That it was necessary for Mr. Wesley to do this is evident, for the people demanded the sacraments from their own pastors. "In many cases the national clergy, upon whom the societies were dependent for these means of grace, were flagitiously immoral: they had often been found at the head of mobs, attack-

ing the Methodists who were to receive the eucharist from their hands the next Sabbath. In not a few instances the Methodists were denied the right of communion. Wesley himself had been repelled from the sacramental altar by the drunken curate of Epworth; his brother had been treated in like manner in Wales; his adherents were so treated in Bristol, Leeds, and parts of Derbyshire. Neither the good temper nor the good sense of his people could require them to submit to this privation and such outrages." A separation was therefore inevitable. The Methodists were driven out of the Established Church by the treatment they received there; and Mr. Wesley was forced by circumstances beyond his control to provide for their organization into a separate establishment. The providence of God raised up the Methodist Church, and, against the previous prejudices and views of the Wesleys, thrust it out as a separate Church, having a great mission to fulfil. It is

the Church of Providence; not born of the wisdom of man, but of God; not planned by men, but developed contrary to human plans; not the product of human foresight, but every part the result of the slow growth of Providence.

Methodism claims moreover to have all the scriptural marks of a true Church. It is evident that a Church may cease to be the Church of God, for the Jewish Church was abandoned and forsaken by God, and the Church at Laodicea was threatened with the same doom. When, therefore, we inquire about the claims of any Church to be the Church of God, we do not ask after its antiquity, or its former character, but its *present condition*. It may be forsaken of God, and no longer acknowledged by him. Such, as many think, is the case in regard to the Church of Rome. What then are the scriptural marks of the true Church?

1. Catholicity of sentiment—a liberal, brotherly regard for all true Christians of every denomination. Moses rebuked

Joshua for an illiberal and exclusive spirit, and our Saviour condemned exclusiveness in very plain terms, and always manifested a kind and liberal spirit. How different the example of Christ from that of many of his professed followers! St. Paul denounced the exclusive and illiberal spirit very strongly in his Epistle to the Corinthians, and declares it “carnal” and blameworthy. The doctrine of Jesus, and Paul, and John is, that *love* is the chief characteristic and the crowning grace of true piety, and that wherever this love is wanting there is no religion. It needs no argument to prove that sectarian bigotry and exclusiveness are not born of love, and are not consistent with it. They come of pride and party selfishness, and are “of the earth, earthy.” They are from beneath, and are marks of the beast and false prophet.

The Methodist Church from the beginning has been opposed to bigotry, and favorable to a large-hearted charity. A

writer of a different denomination says, "Methodism has always been a standing protest, or rather persuasive, against bigotry." This testimony is true. We hold that we belong to the Church of Christ, not as the "olive tree," but as "grafted into the olive tree," and partaking, *with others*, "of the root and fatness of the olive tree," not as the vine itself, but as a branch of the vine.

This first mark, therefore, we have of a true Church of Christ.

2. The second mark is holiness of heart and life. It is self-evident that a wicked Church cannot be the Church of Christ. Such may once have been acknowledged by Christ as his, but is certainly not now. This passage has, alas! been often too applicable to Churches: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Indeed, in the very nature of the case, a

corrupt Church ceases to be a Church of God; “for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”*

I will venture the assertion that there is no Church that has given such prominence in her creed, in her literature, in her preaching, and in her conduct, to the doctrine of holiness, as has the Methodist Church. The great battle-cry of Methodism, and the motto on her banners, is,

“Holiness.” Richard Watson, one of the greatest names in the history of the Church, said: “The two great pillars on which the system of Wesleyan Methodism rests, are universal *love* and universal *holiness*.” This is the sentiment of the whole Church; and so great is its practical influence, that Dr. Chalmers called Methodism “Christianity in earnest.” Sometimes in listening to the preaching of Methodist ministers, the impression is received that, with us, holiness is the one great idea and the great object of life. Oftentimes indeed we are rebuked for being “righteous overmuch.”

The Methodist Church has, therefore, the second mark of the true Church.

3. The prophets and apostles teach us that God is in a peculiar sense with his people, manifesting himself unto them as he does not unto the world; and that the presence of God with the Church is not temporary, but permanent. He shall “abide with us for ever,” and “our fellowship” shall be “with the Father, and

with his Son Jesus Christ." The Lord Jesus has given us this beautiful and precious promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This presence implies power and influence, for it is given in view of our work; and it secures religious comfort and joy, for it is given in view of our trials. This presence is felt within, in the communion of the Holy Ghost, the witness of the Spirit with our spirit, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and the hope which arises from the earnest of the Spirit. This presence is felt by others in the solemn influence of worship, and the power of preaching. Methodists profess to enjoy this sacred presence, to have the witness of the Spirit, to feel the love of God in the soul, and to possess the consciousness of the abiding presence and favor of God. Their worship is deeply impressive, and, while engaged in it, we often feel "our hearts burn within us." Where is the Church that can at all compare with the



Methodist in the freedom and heartiness, the warmth and earnestness of their worship and preaching, and in the joy and confidence of their religious life? Their death-bed testimonies are glorious!

The Methodist Church has then the third mark of a true Church.

4. The conversion of souls through the labors of her ministry. This is that "everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." When the Lord Jesus came, he cautioned the people against "false prophets," and said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." The effect of their preaching, and the result of their labors, constitute the true criterion by which to judge of them. If they lead men to repentance and holiness of life, if their preaching produces true conversions, they are true prophets; if not, they are false prophets. In like manner Jesus addressed the apostles: "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." St. Paul referred tri-

umphantly to the same test: "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." When Christ sent forth his ministers, he gave them the pledge of success in the promise that he would be with them alway, even to the end of the world. We learn therefore that the true ministers of Christ's choosing and ordaining, are those who are successful in turning men to righteousness, and that wherever this is the result of preaching, it proves the preacher to be *chosen* and *ordained by Christ*, whether in the fabled line of succession or out of it.

The ministry of the Methodist Church has been eminently successful in winning souls. Our Church has been gathered

almost exclusively from the world, for we consider the system of proselytism an abomination; and yet the increase has been far greater than that of any other Church. In addition to those who have joined our Church, thousands and tens of thousands have been awakened under our ministry, and have gone into other Churches. In other Churches, many of the most popular ministers, and many of the most pious members were converted under the labors of Methodist preachers. If any one desires further evidence, let him select half a dozen Churches, and ask the members where and by whose labors they were led to repentance, and the result will astonish him.

The Methodist Church has, therefore, the fourth mark of a true Church.

5. Regard for the spiritual wants of the poor. When the vision of the Messiah appeared to the son of Amoz, he saw him preaching "glad tidings to the meek." This was regarded as an evidence of Messiahship; and Jesus went

into the synagogue soon after commencing his public ministry, and read the prophecy, "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor"—the very same prophecy—and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." When John the Baptist sent to Jesus, asking the question, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Jesus said to the messengers, "Go and tell John what things ye have heard and seen; how that the blind see, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised up, and *the poor have the gospel preached unto them.*" This is the great proof of Messiahship—a greater proof than all the array of splendid miracles. To see Jesus pausing for the poor blind beggar to tell his wants, receiving the miserable outcast lepers, and visiting the homes of the poor, is greater evidence that he is from God, and more convincing, than aught else. The true Church, like the true Messiah, preaches the gospel to the poor. When Paul and Bar-

nabas were sent forth to preach the gospel "to the heathen," nothing was thought necessary by way of instruction, save this one item, that they "should remember the poor." "The poor we have always with us," and they shall "never cease out of the land," and the Church must not neglect them. When, therefore, we see Churches neglecting the poor, and following the rich, leaving the poorer districts of the country and cultivating the rich neighborhoods, and remaining in the towns and cities, there is reason to suspect the claims of such Churches. There are indeed a few who publish their shame. They boast that their Church is composed of the *élite* and wealthy, the learned and great. They speak of us as having in our Church the poor and ignorant. Let them boast, for thereby they disprove their claim to be the Church of Christ. The true Church cares for the poor.

Methodism was born, it is true, at Oxford University, but among poor stu-

dents. It grew up among the poor, gathered multitudes of the poor, for whose souls no man cared, into its communion; and now numbers more of the poor among its members than any other Church. Methodism has free seats; and, if necessary, preaches in cabins and groves; publishes free grace to all mankind; and sends out a ministry of heroic men, who go everywhere, "into the streets and lanes," into "the highways and hedges," into the palace and the cabin, into the city and the wilderness, like the ancient apostles, "having no certain dwelling-place." We send missionaries to the heathen of foreign lands, and "to the heathen at our doors," to the Indians of the West, and to the slaves of the Southern plantations.

The subject of slavery greatly agitated our Church for years, until, in 1844, the General Conference took such measures as, if they had been submitted to by the Southern delegates, must have broken up our missions among the blacks.

The masters of slaves would never have suffered a Church with such principles to preach to their servants. The question then arose, Shall we give up our missions to the poor negroes, or give up our ecclesiastical union? Those holy men, thank God, did not hesitate. They could not, they would not abandon the poor slaves. Why not? They were but poor negroes, and to preach to them cost a vast outlay of men and money annually. Why not abandon them, sooner than divide the Church? *Because they were poor!* The Church, South, was true to her poor. Her missionaries are on the rice, and cotton, and sugar plantations, and wherever the poor slave toils, there the Methodist preacher goes with the Bible and the catechism. The Church now numbers nearly two hundred thousand members among the slave population! Here is a mission field occupied almost exclusively by Methodists, and in the cultivation of which there is none of the eclat and parade that is made about

foreign missions; but far more sacrifice and suffering often, and far less support. It is a work little noticed by men, but it is for God's poor.

The Methodist Church, it is true, contains a vast amount of wealth, and a large array of talent and learning in her membership, and is doing a very great work in building up literary institutions, and encouraging literature and science. There is no Church doing as much for the spread of religious literature over the land as ours. Millions of excellent publications are scattered among the people from year to year from our great Book Concerns and Publishing House. The Northern Methodists have a mammoth Book Concern at New York, and another at Cincinnati, and the Southern Methodists have, at Nashville, a great Publishing House, with depositories in nearly every Conference. From these centres books are taken by the itinerant preachers to every part of the land. The itinerancy forms the best system of colportage in the



world, the best agency for books and periodicals ever known. There is scarcely a neighborhood in all this great country to which they do not go in their regular work of preaching, and it is easy to take along a few books, and procure subscribers to papers, thus supplying the people in a double sense with the bread of life. This is true; but the great mission of Methodism is to preach the gospel to the poor. If the Methodist Church should ever die—of which however I entertain no fear—I trust it will die in the cabin of some poor man, and that the last member will be some holy man in the vale of poverty, dying on a bed of straw, attended by the angels of God, and full of triumphant hope of “the glory to be revealed.” There let it die, if die it must. But Methodism still retains the bloom and vigor of youth, and, in the strength of early manhood, “rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.” Less than a century ago our Church was planted in this country; and though many of the other

Churches had been operating here for more than a hundred years before we started, ours is now the largest Church in this country by several hundred thousand members, and is increasing more rapidly than any other. The increase of the last year was about one hundred and fifty thousand! "What hath God wrought!" God is with us of a truth. Men have opposed us, all denominations have cried out against us, but God has been on our side, and none could harm us. A system of proselytism has drawn away thousands of our converts into other Churches, and the temptations of ease and of larger salaries have led hundreds of our ministers, who have become cold in religion, into other pulpits; but God has not yet forsaken us, nor the shout of victory ceased along our lines. Methodism is still young, and increasing in strength; and if we only remain humble, zealous, and holy, the days of Methodism shall be everlasting.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE DOCTRINES OF METHODISM.

It becomes those who are about to join any Church to consider the doctrines which it teaches, and examine into their scriptural character. A man should not connect himself with a Church to whose doctrines he cannot subscribe, unless it be where there is no Church holding his views, and little hope of forming one, and there is one with which he *can conscientiously* unite. But, as a general rule, honesty requires us to join no Church whose doctrines we do not believe. We certainly should not seem to hold and teach doctrines the very reverse of those we really believe.

The Methodist Church, in common with all other orthodox Churches, be-

lieves and teaches the existence of one God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; the depravity of man; the atonement made by Jesus Christ; the work of the Spirit in regeneration and sanctification; justification by faith in Jesus Christ; and a future state of rewards and punishments. These are the great doctrines of inspired truth, which constitute the platform of all evangelical Christians—the confession of faith of all orthodox denominations.

There are other doctrines, however, with regard to which there exists a diversity of opinion; and it is proper to say that, while Methodists are generally agreed in reference to these doctrines, we nevertheless have not thought proper to require those who join us to subscribe to any doctrinal formula besides the Apostles' Creed. We regard experimental and practical religion of vastly more importance than creeds, and insist chiefly on "the fruit of the Spirit." Mr.

Wesley said to his opponents, "If you say, 'Because you hold opinions which I cannot believe are true,' I answer, Believe them true or false, I will not quarrel with you about any opinion. Only see that your heart be right toward God, that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, that you love your neighbor, and walk as your Master walked, and I desire no more. I am sick of opinions, I am weary to hear them. My soul loathes this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion." The platform of Methodism, accordingly, "comprises not one dogmatic statement, nor hardly what could be called an ecclesiastical requisition. All earnest inquirers after religious truth and spiritual purification throughout the world could approve it with scarcely a qualification. It is a purely catholic and apostolical expression of Christianity." Mr. Wesley's journal contains this exclamation: "O that we may never make any thing more or less the term of union with us, but the hav-

ing the mind that was in Christ, and the walking as he walked." The Discipline of the Church to this day is in conformity with this wish, and declares that "there is but one condition previously required of those who wish to join the Church, namely, a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." Character, not creed, is the test of membership.

Methodists have, however, a system of doctrines which are generally believed and cherished among them, and render them peculiar. They firmly hold the great cardinal truths of the Bible, as taught by all orthodox Christians. But they differ from many of their brethren in many minor matters. The majority of the Baptists, the Low-Church Protestant Episcopalians, and the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, believe in the doctrine of absolute predestination and decrees. The Methodists do not believe in that doctrine, and, therefore, cannot agree with the Westminster Confession

of Faith, that “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass;” or, as Dr. Adams expresses it, “the foreordination of every thing which ever comes to pass, even the actions of men and angels.” We do not believe any such doctrine. If that be true, we do not see how man can be a free agent, or responsible for any thing he does, or how there can be any such thing as virtue or vice. If every thing be foreordained, “even the actions of men and angels,” then clearly there can be nothing to blame or punish men for, and the future judgment must be a great farce.

We do not believe the doctrine that, “by the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life, and others to everlasting death,” and are “particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot either be increased or

diminished.” This is strange language ; but it is stranger still when we see that it stands in connection with this remarkable sentence : “Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed any thing because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.” Here, then, is taught distinctly that God, from all eternity, has a decree, in which, without any regard to foreknowledge whatever, he has predestinated a certain and fixed number to everlasting life, and the rest to everlasting death ! Read the quotations again. Can there be any justice in such a decree ? Millions of years before I was born, God puts my name down for heaven or for hell, without any regard to foreknowledge ! The vast majority, too, are predestinated to everlasting death, *“not because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions !”* This is indeed a “horrible decree.” I do



not see how any man can for a moment believe it. The “tender mercies of the Lord are over all his works.” Is there any *tenderness*, or *mercy* either, in such a decree? There is nothing like this in the Bible, where God is “just,” “merciful and gracious,” “*not willing that any should perish*, but that *all* should come to repentance.” In the Bible God declares that he has “no pleasure in the death of the wicked,” and cries out, “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” He invites “*all* the weary and heavy laden,” and “*whosoever will*,” to come unto him, and says, “Look unto me, *all* the ends of the earth, and be ye saved.” If the Bible is true, it contradicts this decree, and it is false; but if the decree be true, then the Bible is false, for it teaches a different doctrine. The ninth chapter of Romans has been considered the stronghold of this awful doctrine; but Presbyterian divines and commentators have at last acknowledged that this chapter refers to “the election of nations to be the people

of God, and to enjoy the advantages of an external revelation, and of their losing these honorable distinctions," as Dr. Macknight says.

This is enough. If this chapter does not contain the doctrine, but refers to nations in this present world, and not to individuals, then it will be difficult to find it anywhere in the Sacred Scriptures, unless indeed you pick out isolated passages and put them together. It is impossible for two directly opposing and contradictory doctrines to be true. One of them must be false; and the Bible cannot teach two doctrines which plainly contradict each other. This decree of predestination, however, contradicts almost every thing in the Bible on the subject of human responsibility. But if this decree be "the *secret* counsel" of God, of course it is not in the Bible, for then it would be no longer "*secret*." How the authors of the Confession of Faith found out the "secret counsel" of God remains yet to be ascertained.

The decrees of God affecting our destiny are not “secret,” but are published in the word of God, and are in these words: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;” and, “In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness shall be accepted of him;” and again, “The wicked shall be turned into hell.” We believe that these are the real decrees of God; that the covenant of God is to save such as “believe,” “fear God and work righteousness,” and that those who do so *are thereby predestinated and elected*, according to the foreknowledge of God, and not otherwise. This is the predestination which we hold: an election according to the eternal principles of the Divine government, and, therefore, called an “eternal election”—an “election of grace,” because on the principles which grace has given.

We hold and teach that, by Divine grace, man’s will is free to choose or

reject the terms of salvation, which are sincerely offered to all men, and that all have the gracious ability to choose salvation and be saved. “The grace of God *that bringeth salvation*, hath appeared *unto all men*.” “I, if I be lifted up, will *draw all men* unto men.” Mark this: he does not say that all shall come unto him, but by his grace he will draw them. “Why *will* ye die?” “Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life.” “How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye *would not*.” In these passages it is evidently implied that there might have been a different exercise of will: they might have willed otherwise. The whole force of the sentence depends on this implied fact. If from any cause whatever they could not will otherwise, then it is folly to blame them for their course. The will is free, and men are not saved because *they will not* be, and not because God has so constituted their nature that they must will

as they do. In such a case, it is not their will, but God causing them to will thus, and, therefore, it is his will.

In Deuteronomy xxx. 15–20, is this language: “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I denounce unto you this day that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days in the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing*; therefore, *choose* life, that both thou and thy seed may live.” In like manner

Joshua addressed the people before his death: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, *choose you* this day whom ye will serve." Josh. xxiv. 15. These passages, if they convey any meaning at all, certainly were intended to guard the people against the idea that, since God had undertaken to save them, they were safe, and nothing could harm them, and that they might do as they pleased. They teach that we *choose* freely our own destiny. This doctrine appears again in the first chapter of Proverbs: "*Because* I have called, and *ye refused*; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. *For that* they hated knowledge, and *did not choose* the fear of the Lord. . . *therefore* shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with *their own devices*." Hosea testified to the same effect: "O Israel, thou hast *destroyed thyself*."

Indeed, the Bible is full of the same great truth. When David went to Keilah, he heard of Saul's intention to proceed against him, and he inquired of the Lord whether Saul would come down, and if so, whether the men of Keilah would deliver him into his hand; and the Lord answered him that Saul would come down, and that the men would deliver him into his hand. "Then David and his men arose, and departed out of Keilah. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah, and he forbore to go forth." Here the Lord answers that Saul will come down, and the men will deliver David, but neither takes place. How is this? Who can defeat the decree of God? There was plainly no decree in the matter. If David had remained there, Saul would have gone down and seized him; but David left the place, and thus escaped. Another instance of the same kind is given in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul foretold that there should "be no loss of any man's

life" in the shipwreck which occurred during his voyage to Rome; but when they were about to abandon the ship at an improper time, he said to them, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." In both these cases no conditions are mentioned in the prophecies, but they are evidently implied; and these cases teach us the great Bible principle that, *in all promises or statements affecting human destiny and responsibility, conditions are implied if not expressed.* "I am with you while ye be with me." "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us." This is very plain, and clearly exhibits the doctrinal position of the Scriptures. They cannot teach two opposite systems. This is evident. When, therefore, no condition is expressed, it is implied, as in the instances referred to.



From all this we conclude that, while the Bible teaches the election and predestination of *nations* to the privileges and advantages of religious instruction, and such external favors, it nowhere sets forth any other than a *conditional election of individuals to eternal life*. Hence, it is said, "Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." The foreknowledge of God is perfect; but if perfect, it embraces all things; therefore it embraces the conduct of free agents. If God cannot foreknow what free agents will do in all cases, his knowledge must be imperfect; and it argues imperfection in God to say that if he foreknows any thing it must be fixed beforehand. Knowledge of any fact that will occur does not affect its freedom in the least. It is brought about by other causes. Any man with a well-informed mind, and a correct knowledge of human nature, can foresee what another, with whom he is well acquainted, will do in given circum-

stances. Napoleon, from his knowledge of the country, the armies and their commanders, is said to have foretold the very day and the result of a battle. If men, with their imperfect acquaintance with the principles of human nature and character, and the circumstances surrounding men, can predict with such accuracy what they will do, how can we deny that God can foreknow the actions of free agents? Our knowledge of men's future conduct certainly does not affect their freedom: why should the perfect foreknowledge of God? Of these two things we are as certain as it is possible for us to be on such a subject, that to God all things are known, and that men are free agents. If God's knowledge is *perfect*, there is no difficulty of reconciling these two great facts. The difficulty in reconciling them arises from our supposing that God's knowledge is, like ours, imperfect. With a *perfect understanding* of men, the laws of nature, and the circumstances around them, surely an *infinite*

*mind* can foresee what they will do, without previously determining it. The Bible is in perfect harmony with itself, therefore, when it teaches a *conditional election* in these words: "Whom he did *foreknow*, he also did predestinate *to be conformed to the image of his Son*;" and again, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus*." This is plain; but how different from the doctrine of the Confession, before quoted at pages 54 and 55!

We do not believe that Christ died only for the "elect," because the Scriptures clearly teach that "*All* we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned *every one* to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of *us all*;" that "God so loved the *world*, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" that "he gave himself a ransom for *all*;" that "he by the grace of God should taste death *for every man*;"

and that “he is the propitiation for our sins, and *not for ours only*, but *also* for the sins of the *whole world*.” Therefore it is, that when Christ gave the commission to his ministers, under which they should act for all coming time, he gave it in these words: “Go ye *into all the world*, and preach the *gospel to every creature*. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” In accordance with this, Christ is declared to be the “true Light which lighteth *every man* that cometh into the world;” and when he was about to depart from the world, he promised the Spirit to comfort the disciples and aid them in their work; and he gave them the assurance, “When he is come, he will convince the *world* of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” These passages show clearly that Christ died for all men alike, that the ministry is charged to preach the gospel to all men alike, that the Spirit strives with all men alike, and that all men may secure their salva-

tion by coming to Christ. Hence he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and "him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and *whosoever* will, let him take the water of life *freely*." The question arises here, Is God *sincere* in this? If so, there can be no such thing as those "eternal decrees of election and reprobation."

This cruel system requires another contradiction of the Holy Scriptures. The grace that operates upon the elect—and for others there is none—is said to be "irresistible," which it must be, of course, in order to secure the certainty of their salvation. But my Bible tells me that Christians may "grieve," and "quench," and "resist" the Spirit, and that the Jews did it. I shall believe the Bible, whatever becomes of Confessions of Faith. A limited atonement contradicts the decla-

ration so often repeated in the Scriptures, that "God is no respecter of persons." What can we say of such a doctrine, which is still held but seldom preached? It is not true, therefore, that the "benefits of the atonement are limited by the decree of God to a certain number of our race, styled the elect. Many great and good men, whom we honor as servants of the Most High, and whom we heartily bid God-speed in all their labors of love, still have inscribed upon their creed that none were 'redeemed by Christ . . . but the *elect only*,' and that 'the rest of mankind God was pleased . . . to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.' 'Glorious justice!' To 'pass by' men and leave them without a Saviour, and, consequently, without any chance or *possibility* of salvation, and to damn them for not believing in a Saviour who never died for them—and in whom they surely ought not to believe if he never 'redeemed' them—is called 'glo-

rious justice!’ Well, if that be justice, it is, as one remarks, ‘justice stamped with the most terrific features of its opposite, so that no human mind can see the glory of the one for the inevitable manifestation of the other.’

“The scheme of absolute predestination, by which God carries out his purposes, touching both the elect and reprobates, is thus delineated by Dr. Chalmers, a great and good man, who possessed liberal views, and a warm, benevolent heart: ‘The will of man, active and spontaneous and fluctuating as it appears to be, is an instrument in his [God’s] hand, and he turns it at his pleasure; and he brings other instruments to act upon it, and he plies it with all its excitements, and he measures the force and proportion of each of them, and every step of every individual receives as determinate a character from the hand of God as every mile of the planet’s orbit. This power of God knows no exceptions. It is absolute and unlimited. . . It reigns and operates

through all the secrecies of the inner man. It gives birth to every purpose. It gives impulse to every desire. It gives shape and color to every conception. It wields an entire ascendancy over every attribute of the mind; and the will, and the fancy, and the understanding, with all the countless variety of their hidden and fugitive operations, are submitted to it. It gives movement and direction through every one point in the line of our pilgrimage. At no one moment of time does it abandon us. It follows us to the hour of death, and it carries us to our place of everlasting destiny in the region beyond it.'

"Now, wherein, as regards man's free agency and his destiny, does the most rank fatalism differ from this rigid predestination? Can fatalism do more than to ply the will with '*all its excitements,*' and measure the '*force and proportion of each of them,*' and give '*birth to every purpose,*' '*impulse to every desire,*' '*form and color to every conception,*' wield an



*'entire ascendancy over every attribute of the mind,' give 'movement and direction through every one point in the line of our pilgrimage,' and 'carry us to our eternal destiny?'* No; fatalism cannot go beyond this; for there is nothing in thought, desire, or action—nothing involving our happiness or misery, in time and in eternity, that is not ascribed, in the foregoing quotation, to the *resisless power of God.*”

Indeed, the doctrine of absolute predestination is a system of fatalism and of contradictions. It is taught that men are predestinated to eternal life, and not only so, but that God has “*foreordained all the means*” for their salvation. Every step, therefore, and “all the actions of men and angels,” are decreed. This implies that God has decreed that a part of the Church shall believe in his secret decrees, and a part shall believe that no such decrees exist!

We believe that it is possible for “those who were once enlightened, and have

tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world, to fall away," to "make shipwreck of faith," and to "be cast out." Conversion does not destroy free agency, nor end our probation, nor remove us from temptation. We are, therefore, warned to "take heed lest we fall," and to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure." St. Paul said of himself, "I keep my body under and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Saul, the King of Israel, was converted ; for it is stated that the "Spirit came upon him, and he was turned *into another man*," and "God gave *him a new heart*." But he became a miserable apostate, so that "the Lord departed from him," and finally he committed *suicide*. St. Paul speaks of certain as "having *damnation*, because they *have cast off* their first faith ;" and of others as having "made shipwreck of faith," and being "delivered unto Satan." Ezekiel testifies plainly with regard to

this point: “When the *righteous turneth away from his righteousness*, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, *shall he live?*” This is the question to be settled—the point we are discussing. How does the inspired prophet answer? He says: “All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, *in them shall he die.*” When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; *for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.*” Jesus gave us this parable: “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with him seven other devils more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell

there; and *the last state of that man is worse than the first.*" In this parable we have, first, the *man's conversion*: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man;" secondly, the fall from grace: "They enter in, and dwell there;" and, thirdly, the final destiny of the apostate: "The last state of that man is worse than the first." On another occasion, Christ said: "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*" St. Paul says, in the eleventh chapter of Romans: "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree: boast not against the branches. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded,

but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, *if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*” St. Peter very plainly says, “If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.”

There are a few passages which at first view do seem to convey the idea that Christians cannot fall away; but they teach no more than the security of those who continue faithful. Jesus at one time encouraged his followers with this strong language: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father is greater than all, and none

is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." The question arises, Can they cease to become Christ's sheep, no longer listen to his voice, and wander from him? That they can is very clear, for God says, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me;" and in Isaiah this confession stands, "All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;" and in Jeremiah, God makes this complaint: "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." It is very evident, therefore, that Christians are perfectly safe while they continue in the hand of Christ, by hearing and following him as their Shepherd; but that if they go astray, they are in danger of ruin. St. Paul triumphantly exclaims that "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor

any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Now, the question arises, Can a Christian *separate himself* from the love of God? Paul does not say that this cannot be done; and we know from the Scriptures that a Christian can, not only "leave his first love," but grow so "lukewarm" that Christ will "spue him out of his mouth." Paul himself uses this language to the Galatians: "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. But *now after that ye have known God*, or rather are known of God, how *turn ye again* to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye are fallen from grace." The Psalmist speaks in the same way of the safety of the righteous while they continue faithful: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be re-

moved, but abideth for ever," and closes the Psalm with these words: "As for such as as *turn aside* unto their crooked ways, the Lord *shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity*;" that is, give them the same portion that the wicked shall receive.

We often hear of a "covenant" between the Father and the Son, by which the Father stipulated to give the Son such a number of souls, if he would come into the world and die for them. Now, while there is frequent mention of covenants in the Bible, I have never been able to find any covenant between the Father and the Son. A covenant is a mutual agreement made by two parties. We never say that a man makes a covenant with himself; but we may say that he makes a covenant with his neighbor. Thus we find in the Bible that covenants were made with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob, with Israel, and with David; and that the Abrahamic covenant was renewed under the gospel, fulfilled in



Christ, confirmed in Christ, and ratified by the blood of Christ; but we nowhere read of any covenant made with Christ. A covenant supposes *a difference* between two parties, *which is removed by the covenant*. This is impossible in regard to the Father and the Son; and there never was nor could be any difference to be removed by covenants. Too often we have representations which make Christ an amiable, tender-hearted, and merciful Son, bargaining with his cruel and hard-hearted Father for a few souls. This is a miserable caricature of the plan of salvation. There was no covenant, for the Father and Son are one, and perfectly agreed in the work of saving men. The mercy and love of the Son is that of the Father, and the Son did only what the Father sent him to do. The covenant with Abraham was, that in Christ *all nations* should be blessed. The new covenant with the house of Israel was to put the law in their minds, and write it on their hearts. In the second Psalm, God

says to Christ, the anointed *Head of the Church*, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." There is no covenant here, and least of all such as limits the number to be saved; but there is a promise, made through its Head, to a praying Church, of wonderful success. In the seventeenth chapter of John, Christ refers to those "given" him by the Father; but he does so in such a manner as to leave no doubt as to whom he referred. Notice the manner in which he prays, first exclusively for his little band of disciples: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world;" then, towards the close of his prayer, he embraces in his intercessions "them also who shall believe on me through their word." This distinction made by Christ will show us who are meant by those "given" to him. They were the twelve apostles only. Hence he says, "I *have* manifested thy name unto the *men* which thou gavest

me"—“*I have given* unto them the words which thou gavest me”—“*These are in the world*”—“While *I was with them* in the world, I kept them in thy name: *those that thou gavest me* have I kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.” We see clearly, then, to whom he refers. It is to the twelve apostles who were given him; and yet one of them was lost.

There is, therefore, no such covenant, and we all do well to “take heed lest we fall,” assured that “he that endureth to the end shall be saved.” Did not David say to Solomon, “If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever?” Did not God send this message by his prophet to the King of Israel: “I am with you while ye be with me?” Then let us not be “high-minded, but fear,” and “take heed lest we fall.”

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE DOCTRINES OF METHODISM, CONTINUED.

WITH regard to the mode of baptism, we believe that it may be legitimately performed by either sprinkling, pouring, or immersion; and, accordingly, we practice any one of these modes, regarding them all valid, but considering pouring most expressive of the meaning of the rite.

That immersion is the *only* mode of baptism, we do not believe. We protest against that doctrine, because it unchristianizes nearly the whole Church for centuries, and declares the best men the Church ever had unbaptized. We protest against it, because it builds a Church upon the wrong foundation, that of water baptism, instead of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It gives too much prominence to the baptism of water, and too little to the baptism of the Spirit. It separates from the Lord's table those who in every other respect are equal in piety to those who separate them. It debars from the privilege and obedience to the duty of baptism all who are too sick to be immersed, all those who repent in prisons and cannot be removed, all those who become religious at sea and wish immediate baptism, all those who seek religion in the great deserts, all who live in the extreme North, where every thing is frozen up nearly all the year. Can any one for a moment suppose that Christ gave a command which it is impossible in some cases to obey? Can any other such command of universal obligation be pointed out?

It is said that the baptism of Christ is our example, and we must be baptized as he was. How so? Was his baptism Christian baptism? It could not be, for Christian baptism was not instituted until after the resurrection of Christ. It could

not be, because Christian baptism is in the name of Christ, and we do not suppose that Jesus was baptized in his own name. It requires faith in Christ, and we do not suppose Jesus was required to profess faith in himself! Moreover, John was not a Christian minister, and was not authorized to perform Christian baptism. Was Christ baptized, then, with John's baptism? This could not be, because John saw the incompatibility of such a thing with the character of Christ, and forbade him. John's baptism was unto repentance; but Christ could not repent, and, consequently, could receive no such baptism. John's baptism was a profession of faith in a coming Messiah; but Jesus was that Messiah, and, consequently, could not profess faith in another. It, then, clearly was neither the Christian nor John's baptism. What was it? Christ told John it was to "fulfil all righteousness."

Dr. Crawford, a Baptist divine, says: "The term *δικαιοσύνη* here, as Olshausen

says, is the equivalent to *δίκαιον*, and means *what the law demands*. In the baptism of Jesus, righteousness was fulfilled: obedience, therefore, must have been rendered to some law which required the act." What law could that be? This is plain, if we remember that Jesus was a priest, and when he came to John, "began to be about thirty years of age:" just the age when priests were consecrated. Now the law required that when the priests were consecrated, water should be sprinkled upon them by a priest, and they were thus set apart to their holy office. John belonged to the priesthood, and, as his forerunner, was the proper person to perform this office for the Messiah. When he did so, the anointing of God took place, as the Spirit in the form of a dove descended and sat upon him. The baptism of Christ was, therefore, by sprinkling water upon him in the river Jordan, and by the descent of the Spirit upon him there. Here, by the terms of the law, there could be no immersion.

We often hear it said that there can be but one mode. Is there no more than one mode of *travelling*, of *fighting*, of *eating*, or *drinking*? But it says, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God," etc. This does not say "one *mode* of baptism," but simply "one baptism." There is "one Lord," and yet he is both Son of man and Son of God. There is "one faith," and yet that "faith" embraces a great many things. There is "one God," and yet there are three persons constituting that "one God," as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Just so there is "one baptism," and yet various modes of performing it, precisely as there is one Lord's Supper, although some receive it sitting, and some kneeling, and the sick lying on their beds.

Can the *quantity* of water used in baptism affect the character of the ordinance, so that at a given point it becomes baptism, and below that point it ceases to be baptism? If so, the Scriptures should have informed us in regard to the exact



amount necessary. *In God's ordinances quantity is not essential, but the spiritual meaning and improvement of the rite.* Men insist upon the quantity of water in baptism, as if it required a certain amount to wash away sin and purify the heart. God's method of indicating spiritual cleansing by outward rites is different from the view that it requires a great quantity of the substance used. The blood of the Passover was "*sprinkled*" upon the "lintel and the two sideposts," and is called the "blood of *sprinkling*." The blood of atonement was "*sprinkled*" before the mercy-seat, and upon the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry, the book, and all the people. The blood of Jesus is "*sprinkled*" upon the heart, and is spoken of as "the *sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus Christ." The Levites were cleansed by "*sprinkling* water of purifying upon them." Various articles were cleansed by the same mode: "A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it into the water, and *sprinkle* it upon

the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons." When leprous persons were to be cleansed, it is said "the priest shall *sprinkle* upon him that is to be cleansed." It was prophesied of Christ that he should "*sprinkle* many nations." St. Paul speaks of the baptism of the Israelites "unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," but this we know was not an immersion, because the Bible again and again says they passed through the sea on "dry ground," and went over "dry shod." Can there be an immersion on "dry ground," and those immersed remain "dry shod?" This is impossible. Asaph, in the seventy-seventh Psalm, gives an inspired description of this baptism, and he states that "the clouds *poured out water*," while God led his "people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." There is a baptism, called such by John the Baptist and our Lord himself, which we know by the plainest language of the Bible to be by *pouring*. It is the baptism of the Spirit. In Proverbs it is said,

“Behold, I will *pour out* my Spirit unto you;” and Zechariah says, “I will *pour upon* the house of David the Spirit of grace;” and Isaiah adds, “I will *pour* my Spirit upon thy seed.” Joel gives a beautiful prophecy in these words: “And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will *pour out* my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I *pour out* my Spirit.” When the apostles received the long-promised *baptism* of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, “*This [baptism] is that [outpouring]* spoken of by the prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days I will *pour out* my Spirit,” etc. And again he said, “He hath *shed forth this*, which ye see and hear.” The promise of Christ was a baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire, and Peter declared that the Spirit was *poured upon them*, and we know that

the “cloven tongues of fire sat on them.” When the gospel was preached in Samaria, many believed, but as yet “the Holy Ghost *was fallen* upon none of them.” As Peter preached to the Gentiles, “the Holy Ghost *fell on* them, *as on us* at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized *with* water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.” Peter then said, “Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?” The Jews present “were astonished because that on the Gentiles *also was poured out* the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

This establishes, beyond a doubt, what the Holy Spirit and Christ meant by baptism. It was sprinkling or pouring. I am satisfied to take the meaning of Christ and the Spirit. I think they understood the matter fully as well as modern Baptists.

Being buried with Christ by baptism, signifies that baptism means a death unto sin. Burying in ancient times was not

an immersion in the ground or a covering up in a grave, as with us; nor did it resemble immersion at all; but was simply the placing of the dead body in a chamber cut out of a rock. There is nothing like immersion in such a burial; and when St. Paul speaks of Christians as buried by baptism, he means that, as Christ was buried out of this world, so Christians, when they are baptized, renounce the world, and give it up in order to lead a new life; or, in other words, they "are crucified with Christ." Dr. Judson, the distinguished missionary, and Dr. Robinson, the Baptist historian, both eminent Baptists, "admit that this passage is misapplied when used as evidence of the mode of baptism."

Dr. Carson, the great champion of the Baptist cause, tried to make it appear that the original word means only immerse; but he had to acknowledge, "*All the lexicographers and commentators are against me.*" Does it not appear rather singular that with regard to the

meaning of a single word there should be such diversity of opinion? It does indeed; but the reason is obvious. The Baptists have sought for the meaning of the word, as used by Christ and his apostles, not by examining the circumstances attending its use, nor the significance of the rite to which it is applied, nor the testimony of those who followed Christ and were most likely to understand how he used it, but by going back to writers of different and previous ages, and different nations. They search for the meaning of *baptizo* in writers of a period hundreds of years before Christ, and who lived in a different part of the world. Who does not know that words in the course of time change their meaning, and often come to signify just the reverse of what they did formerly? Who does not know that the same word is often used in different parts of the country in very different senses? Dr. George Campbell is certainly good authority among Baptists, and his testimony is that “the

sacred use and the classical are often very different;" and this celebrated scholar goes so far as to say that "classical use, both in Greek and Latin, is not only in this study *unavailable*, but *may even mislead*." Dr. Robinson, whose scholarship no one will question, says in the Preface to his Lexicon of the New Testament: "A Lexicon of the New Testament, at the present day, presupposes the fact that the language of the New Testament exhibits in many points a departure from the idiom of the Attic Greek." Again, the same authority says, "The language of the New Testament *is the later Greek*, as spoken by foreigners of the Hebrew stock, *and applied by them to subjects on which it had never been employed by native Greeks*. After the disuse of the ancient Hebrew in Palestine, and the irruption of western conquerors, the Jews adopted the Greek language from necessity; partly as a conquered people, and partly from intercourse of life, of commerce, in colonies, in cities founded like Alexan-

dria and others, which were peopled with throngs of Jews. It was, therefore, the spoken language of ordinary life which they learned, not the classic style of books which have elsewhere come down to us. But they spoke it as foreigners, whose native tongue was the later Aramean; and it, therefore, could not fail to acquire upon their lips a strong Semitic character and coloring. When to this we add that they spoke in Greek on the things of *the true God, and the relations of mankind to Jehovah and to a Saviour—subjects to which no native Greek had ever applied his beautiful language*—it will be obvious that an *appeal merely to classic Greek and its philology will not suffice for the interpretation of the New Testament. The Jewish Greek must be studied almost as an independent dialect.*” Besides, this Christian baptism was first instituted by Christ, and was never in existence before, and, therefore, could not have been defined by writers before the time of Christ. He took a word then in use and applied it to



his newly instituted ordinance, and thus gave it a fresh and sacred meaning. For that meaning it is folly to search the books of classic Greek. We must examine the New Testament itself. The testimony of the New Testament we have seen in these pages. There to baptize means to "pour" and to "sprinkle." Thus God baptized the Israelites, thus Christ sprinkles many nations, thus the Spirit baptized the apostles and the household of Cornelius. I think the minister should baptize as God baptizes; and I prefer to have my body baptized as the Spirit baptizes my soul.

More than this, God blesses those baptized by sprinkling or pouring as much as any other Christians. They are as pious, enjoy as much religious peace, have as strong a hope of heaven, succeed as well in leading sinners to Christ, and die as happy, as those who are baptized by immersion.

We believe that infants should be baptized. It is said, "Infants cannot exer-

cise faith, and, therefore, should not be baptized." I will ask one question: Is it proper to require of infants what is required of adults? Now, it is said, "He that believeth not shall be damned:" why not argue against the possibility of infant salvation on the ground that they cannot believe? They are saved without faith, and, therefore, are baptized without faith. If they may be saved without faith, it is plain that they may be baptized without it.

It is often said that "it can do them no good to baptize them." If this objection have any force, it ought to have kept the Jews from obeying God's command to circumcise their children at eight days old. Those who urge this objection pretend to be wiser than God; for he required circumcision, when the child could not understand the rite. In this objection, then, there is the presumption that sets ourselves up as judges of the utility of God's laws. Infant baptism is well adapted to exert a very salu-

tary and restraining influence upon the whole after-life. The child, growing up with the knowledge that his parents gave him to God, and had God's name put upon him in infancy, and offered up prayers for his conversion and piety, must often feel deeply the claims of religion upon him, and experience a restraining influence. It is well adapted to awaken reflection, and cause serious thoughts; and it does act as a binding obligation upon the parents to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

But more than this, infant baptism meets a want of our nature, and provides for a necessity that grows out of the human constitution. The affection of parents for their children is natural; the interest felt in the religious welfare of children grows out of our natural affection for them; and the desire to have our children with us in the Church, and sharing with us the benefits of religion, is also the result of natural affection,

sanctified by grace. The desire to have our children in the same religious covenant with ourselves is natural and universal; and there is, I believe, no religious system that does not in some manner recognize children. Every denomination of Christians, save the Baptist, makes some provision for children, and the conduct of the Baptists shows that they feel the want of some way to recognize their children religiously. In some places they have practiced what they call infant blessing. They take their children to the minister, who receives them in his arms, puts his hand upon their heads, and solemnly pronounces a blessing upon them. To my mind this demonstrates the truth that infant baptism is founded upon a want of our nature, and is admirably adapted to the philosophy of the mind.

It is said that "there is no express command for infant baptism, and, therefore, it should not be practiced;" and yet the same persons who urge this objection

practice *close communion*, for which there is not the least shadow of an express command, but which is a violation of brotherly love and Christian union. There is no express command for female communion, nor is there any for the expulsion of a gambler or dancing-master from the Church. But all Churches agree in regard to the propriety of these things. How is this? It is because in many things no express command is needed. Just so in regard to infant baptism. The question is, not to show an express command requiring it, but to find an express command forbidding it; and if there is no command forbidding it, we are bound to practice it. How is this? It is because infants have always been embraced in the covenant of grace, and have always received its sign and seal. The Abrahamic is the covenant of grace—the covenant by virtue of which the Christian Church exists. So Paul teaches: “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen

through faith, preached before the *gospel* unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." The covenant, then, made with Abraham, which is in these words, "In thee shall all nations be blessed," is the "*gospel*." Again he says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; that the *blessing of Abraham* might come on the Gentiles *through Jesus Christ*; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." This clearly shows that the covenant with Abraham is the covenant of grace which still exists, and by which spiritual blessings are conveyed. Thus St. Paul shows that the Mosaic covenant did not abolish or repeal the Abrahamic, but was only a temporary and typical dispensation, given for the purpose of conveying to the mind the spiritual import of the greater and permanent covenant: "Though it were a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises

made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And *to thy seed, which is Christ*. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed *before* of God in Christ, [the Abrahamic,] the law, [of Moses,] which was four hundred and thirty years after, *cannot disannul*, that it should make the promise of none effect. Wherefore then serveth the law [of Moses]? It was added because of transgressions, *till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.*" The Abrahamic covenant was, then, a promise to Abraham, and *to Christ as his seed*, and is, therefore, the Christian covenant, which the Mosaic law did not change; but the latter, passing away at the coming of Christ, leaves the covenant still in force. Paul says, in view of this, "Know ye, therefore, that they which are *of faith* are the children of Abraham. And if ye be *Christ's*, then are ye *Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to the promise." This is conclusive: more might be added, but it is not necessary. The Abrahamic is the Chris-

tian covenant, by virtue of which the Church exists. But the Abrahamic covenant embraced infants, and its sign and seal were given to infants.

Nor will it avail any thing to say that circumcision referred only to temporal blessings, and was the sign of the covenant only so far as the land of Canaan was concerned. This is not true. Circumcision was the sign and seal of the covenant in all its meaning, and especially in its spiritual signification. St. Paul is sufficient authority, and he states expressly of Abraham, “He received the sign of circumcision, a *seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had.*”

It is beyond doubt, therefore, that the Christian covenant embraces children, and gives to them its sign and seal, which, by the order of Christ, is now baptism.

But I will prove this in another way. It is a principle that will not be called in question, that the Mosaic was a typical and representative dispensation; and that



there is something in the New Testament Church answering to every thing in the Mosaic Church. Let us apply this principle: The year of jubilee represents the preaching of the glorious gospel of Christ as "the acceptable year of the Lord" to all people. The Sabbath has been changed to the Christian Lord's-day. The high-priest represents the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the High-Priest of our profession. The priesthood is succeeded in the Christian Church by the whole body of believers, who now constitute a "royal priesthood," to "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." The temple of the Old Testament represents the indwelling of the Spirit in believers, and now our "bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost." The sacrifices represented the one sacrifice made for sin by our great High-Priest, "who by one offering has for ever perfected them that are sanctified." The Passover has been changed to the Lord's Supper. What comes in the place of cir-

cumcision? We have seen that every thing else has given place to something in the Christian Church, and there is something to answer to every thing under the old dispensation: now what answers to circumcision? There must be something, and undoubtedly it is baptism. Paul teaches this: “For as many as *have been baptized* into Christ have put on Christ. And *if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed*, and heirs according to the promise.” In this language it is declared that to become Christians is to become the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the covenant promise. But it is also stated that baptism makes us formally Christians; therefore, baptism makes us the seed of Abraham, and members of the covenant. If baptism places us within the covenant, then it has of course taken the place of circumcision, which was formerly the initiatory rite. Baptism, by making us Christians, makes us the seed of Abraham, which circumcision formerly did. This is plainly

the meaning of this passage. In Col. ii. 11, 12, baptism is called the Christian circumcision, and is said to have the same position and meaning in the Christian that circumcision had in the Jewish Church.

Mr. Orvis, a distinguished minister of the Campbellite Baptist Church, in a debate with Mr. Magruder, on the nature of the kingdom of Christ, says: "Now, I think that we have placed this point beyond controversy, that it was not the *carnal* descendants of Abraham to whom this great promise [the covenant] was made, but that it was to the *spiritual* seed, of which he was accounted the father, as being the most conspicuous man in his devotion to God, being, in fact, designated the 'Father of the faithful.' It is to him, and to his spiritual, not his carnal descendants, that the promises are made." This yields the point, because it concedes the spiritual character and perpetuity of the Abrahamic covenant.

The celebrated missionary, Dr. Judson, in opposing infant baptism, said: "If I adopt the Abrahamic covenant, and consider the Christian Church a continuation of the Abrahamic or Jewish system, I must adopt the former part of the alternative;" that is, admit children to baptism.

Here is a distinguished Baptist acknowledging that, if the Abrahamic covenant is still in force, children must be baptized, and another Baptist saying that the Abrahamic covenant "beyond all controversy" is spiritual, and applies to all Christians.

What is the argument for the observance of the *Christian Sabbath*? There is no express command for its observance anywhere in the Holy Scriptures—not one. Nor is there any thing which clearly teaches us when, or how, it was changed from the Jewish to the Christian Sabbath. The Jewish system was abolished: why then do we still observe any Sabbath? The only reason we can

give is that, while whatever was exclusively a part of the Mosaic law was abolished, whatever was also a part of the moral law, or of a former and spiritual obligation, was not abolished. The Sabbath was a part of the moral law, and was made obligatory as a spiritual ordinance before the existence of the Mosaic economy. When the Mosaic system was given, it contained a statute for the observance of the Sabbath as a national and symbolical day. This statute was repealed, but it left the Sabbath still obligatory as a part of the unrepealed moral law. The Sabbath is still in force, not in the sense of a Jewish day of ceremonial rest and worship, but as a day "for man," in the comprehensive sense of the term. What, therefore, is once enacted remains as law, and binding, until repealed. When has the moral law containing the command to observe the Sabbath been repealed? or when has the Abrahamic covenant been abolished? The argument for infant baptism is precisely the

same as that for the Christian Sabbath, with only this difference: there is far more proof of the fact that baptism has taken the place of circumcision, than for the fact that the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday.

The difficulty with most Baptists is in regarding the Abrahamic covenant and the Jewish law as the same. They are separate and distinct. The Jewish system incorporated into it circumcision, in its restricted and Jewish sense, as it did also the Sabbath in a restricted sense; but this did not affect the spiritual and universal character of either. Jesus abolished, with the Jewish system, circumcision and the Sabbath, in the Mosaic sense, but in this he did not affect the spiritual and universal sense of either. They remain *as before Moses*, only he changed both—one to baptism, the other from the seventh to the first day of the week. The Scriptures clearly teach that *the Abrahamic covenant is everlasting*, and has not been abolished; and we find the

New Testament distinguishing between circumcision, as given by Moses, and as given by Abraham, and implying that *in the former sense it is abolished*. “Moses therefore gave you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, [originally,] *but of the fathers*.” “And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised, *after the manner of Moses*, ye cannot be saved.” “There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to *keep the law of Moses*.” When the council of the apostles and elders assembled to consult about this matter, a decree was unanimously passed which clearly makes the same distinction, and implies the repeal of circumcision as a part of the law of Moses: “Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be *circumcised, and keep the law*: to whom we gave no such

commandment.” It is very clear, therefore, that the Jewish law was repealed, but that it did not affect the Abrahamic covenant, which is “everlasting,” and cannot be “disannulled, or made of none effect;” being, in the language of Paul, “the gospel” which God “preached before unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” Gal. iii. 8. This, then, is the unrepealed law of God; and it makes children subjects of its initiatory ceremony, which we have already proved to be changed to baptism, as the Sabbath was from the seventh to the first day.

It is, then, beyond a doubt the duty of the Church to baptize infants. Hence Christ said to his disciples, “Go ye and teach [disciple] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” If an express command were needed, this is sufficient. Christ commands them to baptize all na-



tions, and this is impossible if infants are not to be baptized. This is as plainly a command to baptize children as any other part of the nations. When the Jews desired to understand the relation of their children to Christianity, Peter answered, "The promise is to you, and to your children." And with this view of the covenant of grace the apostles baptized various families, and left infant baptism in the Church, where it has been practiced until this day. It cannot be proved that there were no children in any of the "households" baptized by the apostles; but, on the contrary, the presumption is that there were children in them. If the sacred writers wished to exclude the idea of infant baptism, it is very singular that they so carelessly recorded the baptism of several households. We do not find such statements in the journals of Baptist ministers without qualifying remarks accompanying them. Take into consideration the fact that infant baptism has always been practiced

in the Church, and we can find no cause for it, unless it was received from the apostles themselves. Certainly, if the early Fathers were antipedobaptists, infant baptism could never have entered the Church. The fact that infant baptism has existed from the earliest period of the Church, proves that the Church in early times was not antipedobaptist.

Irenæus wrote about sixty-seven years after the apostolic age, and he says, "Christ came to save all persons by himself; all, I mean, who by him are regenerated unto God—infants and little ones, and children and youths."

Origen, who was born about eighty-five years after the apostolic times, said, "Infants, by the usage of the Church, are baptized."

The Council of Carthage was held one hundred and fifty-three years subsequent to the age of the apostles, and when the question was brought up, whether infants should be baptized before they were eight days old, it was unanimously de-

creed by the Council, consisting of sixty-six bishops, that "their baptism need not be deferred till the eighth day "

Ambrose says, "The baptism of infants was the practice of the apostles, and has been in the Church till this time."

Augustin wrote, "Infant baptism the whole Church practices: it was not instituted by councils, but was ever in use."

Pelagius said, "I never heard of any, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants."

This is enough. This proves two things: first, that infant baptism was universally practiced by the Church from the days of the apostles; and, secondly, that there were at that early day no Baptist Churches like those of this age, who deny infant baptism.

The "evils of infant baptism" are imaginary, and are drawn out by a logic strangely at variance with the laws of reasoning. Instead of evil, it leads the parent to feel that his children are in the covenant, and must be trained aright;

and it impresses upon the youthful mind the obligations of a religious life, and the duty of serving God.

We believe in the doctrine of the direct witness of the Spirit. Wesley is very explicit in his statement of this doctrine. "What," he asks, "*is the witness of the Spirit?*" The original word *μαρτυρία* may be rendered either (as it is in several places) *the witness*, or, less ambiguously, *the testimony*, or *the record*; so it is rendered in our translation, (1 John v. 11,) 'This is the record,' the testimony, the sum of what God testifies in all the inspired writings, 'that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' The testimony now under consideration is given by the Spirit of God to and with our spirit. He is the Person testifying. What he testifies to us is, 'that we are the children of God.' The immediate result of this testimony is, 'the fruit of the Spirit,' namely, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness.' And without these, the testimony

itself cannot continue. For it is inevitably destroyed, not only by the commission of any outward sin, or the omission of known duty, but by giving way to any inward sin: in a word, by whatever grieves the Holy Spirit of God. I observed many years ago, It is hard to find words in the language of men to explain the deep things of God. Indeed, there are none that will adequately express what the Spirit of God works in his children. But perhaps one might say, (desiring any who are taught of God to correct, soften, or strengthen the expression,) By the 'testimony of the Spirit,' I mean an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that 'Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God. After twenty years' further consideration, I see no cause to retract any part of this. Neither do I conceive how any of these

expressions may be altered so as to make them more intelligible. I can only add, that if any of the children of God will point out any other expressions which are more clear, or more agreeable to the word of God, I will readily lay these aside. Meantime, let it be observed, I do not mean hereby that the Spirit of God testifies this by any outward voice: no, nor always by an inward voice, although he may do this sometimes. Neither do I suppose that he always applies to the heart (though he often may) one or more texts of Scripture. But he so works upon the soul by his immediate influence, and by a strong though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm; the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that all his 'iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered.'"

This doctrine is clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures. There the Christian is represented as full of love, "peace that

passeth all understanding," "joy in the Holy Ghost which is unspeakable and full of glory," and "hope that maketh not ashamed," even the "full assurance of hope." This experience is uniformly spoken of in the Bible as common to all true believers. Such an experience cannot exist without a personal consciousness—a knowledge—of acceptance with God. In a state of uncertainty, of doubt and anxiety, such an experience is plainly impossible. Accordingly, the Bible speaks of Christians as knowing that they are the children of God.

Enoch had "this testimony that he pleased God," and so had Abraham and the patriarchs. Job could say under the pressure of the heaviest afflictions, "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth!" David and Asaph composed hymns for the ancient Church, which are full of religious confidence and joy. The apostles used the strongest expressions of assurance. They *knew* that they "were of God"—that they were "born of God"—that they had

“passed from death unto life;” and St. John says, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” The same apostle says, “He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.” St. Paul expressly testifies to the direct witness of the Spirit: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” The plain testimony of Scripture is always sufficient; but at this time, when so many deny this great and glorious doctrine, it is satisfac-



tory to be able to refer to divines of other Churches, who state the doctrine as we do, and in nearly the same language. Read the following:

“The witness of the Spirit is a thing that we cannot express: a certain inexpressible assurance that we are the children of God; a certain secret manifestation that God hath received us, and put away our sins. No one knows it but they that have it. I confess it is a wondrous thing, and if there were not some Christian did feel it and know it, you might believe there was no such thing; but it is certain that there is a generation of men that know what the seal of the Lord is.”—*Preston.* -

“The testimony of the Spirit is immediate, by his secret influence upon the heart, quieting and calming all distrust and diffidence concerning its condition, by his own immediate power. Fear is banished by a soft whisper from the Spirit of God in the heart; and this in

such a way that, though the spirit of man is calmed by it, yet it cannot tell how it comes to pass.”—*Simon Ford*.

“God hath been pleased to give us the witness of the Spirit in the way of an immediate impression. The Spirit, as a ‘Spirit of adoption,’ testifies to the believer’s soul that he belongs to God. As, by the ‘sealing of the Spirit,’ he stamps his own image on his children, for the conviction of others, so, by ‘the witness of the Spirit,’ he testified to their adoption, for the more immediate comfort of their own souls. Do not condemn the witness of the Spirit merely because you cannot comprehend it: rather pray to God that you yourself may be his children. In this way you may hope that the Spirit will testify of your adoption.”—*Charles Simeon*.

“It is the office of the Holy Ghost to assure us of the adoption of sons, to create within us a sense of the paternal love of God toward us, to give us an earnest of our everlasting inheritance.

As, therefore, we are born again by the Spirit, and receive from him our regeneration, so we are also assured by the same Spirit of our adoption; and because, being sons, we are also heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ by the same Spirit, we have the pledge, or rather the earnest of our inheritance.”—*Bishop Pearson*.

It is remarkable that however different may be the doctrinal views of divines, the religious experience of all true Christians is similar. The one is intellectual, the other spiritual and emotional. The head may be heterodox, but, where the Spirit truly operates, the heart is orthodox.

Dr. Wayland, in his admirable Memoir of Dr. Judson, the Baptist missionary, says of his experience: “From the moment of his conversion, he seemed never through life to have been harassed by a doubt of his acceptance with God. The new creation was so manifest to his consciousness, that in the most decided form he had the witness in himself.”

Mrs. Isabella Graham speaks of her conversion thus: "I rolled my condemned, perishing, corrupted soul upon this Jesus, exhibited in the gospel as a Saviour from sin. My views then were dark compared with what they now are; but this I remember, that at the time I felt a heart-satisfying trust in the mercy of God as the purchase of Christ, and for a time rejoiced with joy scarcely supportable, singing almost continually the one hundred and third Psalm."

Dr. Dabney, in a Memoir of the Rev. Dr. Sampson, a distinguished Presbyterian minister, says of him: "It is believed that from his conversion to the day of his death, no serious cloud ever overshadowed his assurance. He lived continually under the peaceful light of a sure hope."

Whitefield describes his conversion in these glowing words: "But O, with what joy, joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of glory, was my soul filled when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding

sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul. Surely it was the day of my espousals, a day to be had in everlasting remembrance. At first my joys were like a spring-tide, and, as it were, overflowed the banks: go where I would, I could not avoid the singing of psalms almost aloud: afterward they became more settled, and, blessed be God, saving a few casual intervals, have abode and increased in my soul ever since."

The Methodist, Thomas Lee, who lived a most holy life, and died triumphantly, says that when he was converted, "in a moment God broke in upon my soul in so wonderful a manner that I could no longer doubt of his forgiving love. I cried, My Lord and my God! And with the spirit I was then in, I could have praised, and loved, and waited to all eternity."

This will suffice. The testimony of Christian experience is very strong, because it is the testimony of the heart, and

it clearly proves the witness of the Spirit. Such experiences cannot proceed from inferences with regard to our acceptance, nor from any process of reasoning on the character of our conduct. Religious experience is not intellectual, but of the sensibilities—not a mental conclusion, but a feeling of the heart—an emotional intuition. It is sudden, joyful, inspiring, indescribable.

Another testimony is given by the history of the Church. Wesley said: “With regard to the assurance of faith, I apprehend that the whole Christian Church in the first centuries enjoyed it. For though we have few points of doctrine explicitly taught in the small remains of the ante-Nicene fathers, yet, I think, none that carefully reads Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Origen, or any other of them, can doubt whether either the writer himself possessed it, or all whom he mentions as real Christians. And I really conceive, both from the *Harmonia Confessionum*, and whatever else I have

occasionally read, that all the Reformed Churches in Europe did once believe, 'Every true Christian has the Divine evidence of his being in favor with God.' " Again he says: "I know, likewise, that Luther, Melancthon, and many other (if not all) of the Reformers, frequently and strongly assert that every believer is conscious of his own acceptance with God; and that by a supernatural evidence."

Sir William Hamilton, the greatest philosophical writer of our age, declares that "*Assurance*, personal assurance, special faith, (*the feeling of certainty* that God is propitious to me, that my sins are forgiven, *fiducia*, *plerophoria fides*, *fides specialis*,) assurance was long universally held in the Protestant communities to be the criterion and condition of a true or *saving faith*. Luther declares that 'he who hath not assurance spews faith out;' and Melancthon, that 'assurance is the dividing line of Christianity from heathenism.' Assurance is, indeed, the *punctum saliens* of Luther's system; and unacquaintance

with this, his great central doctrine, is one prime cause of the chronic misrepresentation which runs through our recent histories of Luther and the Reformation. Assurance is no less strenuously maintained by Calvin: is held even by Arminius, and stands essentially part and parcel of all the confessions of all the Churches of the Reformation down to the Westminster Assembly. In that Synod assurance was, in Protestantism for the *first*, and indeed the *only* time, formally declared '*not to be of the essence of faith*;' and, accordingly, the Scottish General Assembly has subsequently once and again condemned and deposed the holders of this, the doctrine of Luther, of Calvin, of all the other Churches of the Reformation, and of the older Scottish Church itself. In the English, and more particularly in the Irish Establishment, assurance still stands a necessary tenet of ecclesiastical belief. Assurance was, consequently, held by all the older Anglican Churchmen, of whom Hooker may stand



for the example; but assurance is now openly disavowed without scruple by Anglican Churchmen, high and low, when apprehended; but of these many are incognizant of the opinion, its import, its history, and even its name."

The doctrine of Christian perfection is generally spoken of as peculiar to the Methodist Church, though it is held and taught by eminent divines of nearly all denominations. Holiness is certainly required of all men, and is the standard of moral character, and the sum of the Divine law. This is so much and so often insisted upon in the Scriptures, that quotations seem to be unnecessary. Holiness is the burden of patriarch, priest, Psalmist, prophet, and apostle. The book is full of it. Jesus not only taught it at all times, but in his life gave an example of it, to which he pointed all, saying, "Follow me." Of him an inspired apostle wrote, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Without holiness "no man

shall see the Lord.” We are, therefore, not surprised that our great duty in this life is to “perfect holiness in the fear of God.” But we cannot do this in our own strength. We are forgetful of our highest interests, and fearfully “prone to wander.” For this, however, there is ample provision in the gospel. The Spirit is given, like “rivers of water,” to “them that ask for it,” and as freely and willingly as a father gives food to his children. This Spirit is our “Sanctifier,” and “sanctification” is “through the Spirit.” In answer to the fervent prayer of faith, God pours out the Spirit upon his people in gracious baptisms, which quicken their consciences, increase their love and faith and humility, inspire them with joy and peace, and impart burning desires after holiness. These outpourings are in proportion to our faith and our desire, and in answer to our prayers. If we have strong faith, and, accordingly, pray with great desire, the Spirit descends, as on the day of Pentecost, like a pouring

rain; but if we have only ordinary faith, we shall only receive the Spirit as the gentle dew, imperceptibly falling upon us. If this is true, the work of becoming holy by the operation of the Divine Spirit must vary in different persons, and in the same person at different times.

But the Scriptures recognize a state of grace to which all may and should attain, by the aid of the Spirit of grace. This is called "perfection," and those who enjoy it are called "perfect." Let no one, however, misunderstand these terms. This is not the absolute perfection of God's character, it is not the perfection of heaven, it is not the perfection of Eden; it is only the perfection of Christians in this present world, and implies neither freedom from ignorance, infirmity, nor temptation. It is not a state definitely fixed and bounded, but a stage of religious experience eminently progressive in its character. We do not mean always precisely the same degree of excellence in all respects when we say of

different persons, they are perfect gentlemen, they are perfect musicians, or they are perfect scholars; nor is precisely the same meaning always attached to the language, “a perfect Christian.” Christian perfection, like all other human perfection, is simply an eminent degree of excellence. It is Christian manhood—the maturity of religious character. It does not exclude all mistakes, but it excludes wilful disobedience. It may not in popular language exclude all sin, but it certainly excludes all *voluntary and known sin*. This is the doctrine of Mr. Wesley, and without doubt also of the word of God. Perfect Christians “are not,” he says, “free from ignorance, no, nor from mistake. We are no more to expect any man to be infallible than to be omniscient. From infirmities none are perfectly freed till their spirits return to God; neither can we expect, till then, to be wholly freed from temptation; for ‘the servant is not above his Master.’ But neither in this sense is there any ab-

solute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees, none which does not admit of a continual increase.”

To one of his correspondents he says: “The proposition which I will hold is this: ‘Any person may be cleansed from all sinful tempers, and yet need the atoning blood.’ For what? For ‘negligences and ignorances;’ for both words and actions, (as well as omissions,) which are, in a sense, transgressions of the perfect law. And I believe no one is clear of these till he lays down this corruptible body.” Perfection, as defined by Wesley, is not, then, perfection according to the absolute moral law: it is what he, following the Scriptures, calls it, *Christian perfection*: perfection according to the new moral economy introduced by the atonement, in which the heart, being sanctified, fulfils the law by love, (Rom. xiii. 8, 10,) and its involuntary imperfections are provided for by that economy without the imputation of guilt, as in the case of infancy and all irresponsible persons.

The only question, then, can be, Is it possible for good men so to love God that all their conduct, inward and outward, shall be swayed by love? that even their involuntary defects shall be swayed by it? Is there such a thing as what the inspired writer calls the "perfect love," which "casteth out fear?" 1 John iv. 18. Wesley believed that there is; that it is the privilege of all saints; and that it is to be received by faith.

In a letter to one of his female correspondents he says: "I want you to be *all love*. This is the perfection I believe and teach; and this perfection is consistent with a thousand nervous disorders, which that high-strained perfection is not. Indeed, my judgment is, that (in this case particularly) to overdo is to undo; and that to set perfection too high, is the most effectual way of driving it out of the world." When he thus explained his opinion to Bishop Gibson, the prelate replied: "Why, Mr. Wesley, if this is what you mean by perfection, who

can be against it?" "Man," he says, "in his present state, can no more attain Adamic than angelic perfection. The perfection of which man is capable, while he dwells in a corruptible body, is the complying with that kind command: 'My son, give me thy heart!' It is the loving the Lord his God, with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind." Such was his much-misrepresented doctrine of Christian perfection.

If any one dislikes this doctrine, his controversy is not with us, but with the Bible, where it is clearly and repeatedly taught in language too plain to be misunderstood, and in passages too many to be quoted. There he will find it in almost every page, and urged by motives vast as eternity, high as heaven, deep as hell, infinite as the perfections of God. There he will find the biography of "perfect" men and "full of the Holy Ghost," and the promises of God "exceeding great and precious, whereby we may become partakers of the Divine nature."

There he will find that to reject this doctrine is to reject such inspired commands and promises as these: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." "Ye shall be holy, therefore, for I am holy." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." "With the Lord is plenteous redemption; and he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." "Perfect love casteth out fear." "He that feareth is not made perfect in love." "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy



God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” So rich is the grace of God unto us that we may “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,” and “be filled with all the fulness of God.” The Bible is indeed full of this doctrine. It is the life and glory of Methodism, and the real secret of her strength and success. We shall prosper just so long as we preach and cherish and experience this great and precious truth. By this, in connection with the atonement, we shall conquer, and, neglecting this, we must fall. There is power, Divine power, in holiness—power that convinces, wins the hearts of men, and attracts them to us. The true distinction of a Church is to be “glorious in holiness.”

## CHAPTER V

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE METHODIST  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

THE Scriptures prescribe no particular form of government for the Christian Church, but leave it to be determined as circumstances seem to demand. The government of the apostolic Churches appears to have been a gradual development—the growth of years. Christ sent out ministers to travel and preach the gospel: they went forth on their holy work, and converts multiplied wherever they preached: these they gathered together, placing some one over them to direct them in their religious course; and by means of the apostles and general councils they connected these societies together. This was the plan, or rather

the want of all plan, which appears to have been adopted by the apostles.

This is just the way Methodism originated. It is the growth of years, and gradually developed into form and order under the controlling providence of God. Mr. Wesley was constrained by the grace of God, and led by a series of singular providences, to preach the gospel in various places with great zeal and earnestness, so that many persons were awakened and sought instruction from him. He could not refuse to provide for their spiritual improvement, for the Church was too dead to sympathize with them, and the ministry too ignorant of experimental and practical religion to become their guides. He was, therefore, compelled by a sense of duty to take charge of them; but then their numbers increased in every place where he preached, so that he was unable to attend personally to them all. Soon, however, there were found those who, by every scriptural test, gave sufficient evidence of a

call to preach ; and these he sent forth to aid him. But still that careful personal attention to the religious wants of the people under his instruction, which is so necessary to growth in grace, was wanting. To meet this, he appointed experienced and pious laymen to be leaders of small companies ; and so, in after-years, he appointed faithful men to take charge of the financial affairs of the societies. To unite preachers and societies, and the better to regulate them, he was driven to the necessity of holding annual meetings for conference ; and in this country the work spread so rapidly as to require the formation of many conference districts, and the organization of a General Conference for the oversight of the whole work. Thus Mr. Wesley was called by the Spirit and providence of God to be the Apostle of Methodism, and was so regarded by the preachers who voluntarily sought his direction and control in their labors.

In this office he has been succeeded in

this country by the Bishops, who are elected by the preachers, and whose authority is far less than that of Mr. Wesley, and indeed it extends but little beyond the appointment of the preachers, and the moderatorship in the Conferences. The Conferences are assemblies for the annual examination of the character of the preachers, the reception of candidates for the travelling ministry, and the regulation of the work within their bounds. The General Conference is composed of delegates from the various Annual Conferences, who meet once in four years to consult about the general interests of the Church, elect Bishops, and examine into the character and official conduct of the Bishops. Thus the government of the Church grew into form in a manner remarkably similar to that of the Apostolic Churches.

It is sometimes objected that we deprive the laity of representation. This is not true. It is true that the Conferences are composed of preachers; but

there is not one of them who does not represent the laity. Born and brought up among the people, and authorized by them to preach, and laboring among them daily, with every opportunity of knowing their views and wishes, they are fully qualified to represent them. Methodism calls her preachers from every employment and profession to minister at her altars, and thus, from their habits of life, they are prepared to represent the people, and have that practical wisdom and experience which makes them safe and conservative counsellors. Methodism owes much to that Divine providence which has kept it in the old apostolic plan of taking men from the various employments of active life, and fresh from daily communion with the multitude, to minister in holy things, for they know the people, are in sympathy with them, speak in their language, and are understood by them; and, moreover, they make safe and wise legislators. The interests of the preachers and of the people are not

separate, that there should be different representatives of each class; but they are identical and common. The preachers represent no one class or section, but the whole work and the cause of Christ; and there is provision also for the presence and advice of laymen at the Conferences. Whenever it is desired by the members, and a feasible plan is suggested, the preachers will not object to a representation of laymen.

Much is said about the republicanism of Church-government; but what has republicanism to do with it? Is it proper that all government should be republican? Why, then, is not republicanism found in family government; in the government of a ship, or a school, or an army? Will any one pretend to say that the government of the first Christian Churches was republican? Is heaven under republican government?

*That government is best which best secures the rights and promotes the prosperity of its members, and the success of its enterprises.*

This is a principle which all must acknowledge to be just, and a proper test. Try the government of our Church by it, and I venture to say that it will come out far ahead of any other Church. There is every guaranty of the rights of private members. They cannot be tried but after due notice in proper form, and before a jury of their brethren, and then they have the right of appeal to the Quarterly Conference, and, moreover, can bring charges against the pastor, and have him put upon his trial before the Annual Conference of which he is a member, if they think he has conducted the trial unfairly. This is very different from the security of private members in most other Churches. "In the Protestant Episcopal Church the expulsion of a member is solely with the clergyman, and there is no appeal but to the Bishop. In the Presbyterian Church the preacher and the ruling elders (appointed for life) alone try and expel members." In the Baptist Church there is no appeal whatever; and



it is difficult to understand how there is any government at all among them. Recently very grave charges were brought against a prominent man, and proceedings were instituted in his case before the church of which he was a member, and he was expelled by the unanimous vote of the members present and voting, who constituted a very large majority of the entire membership. But a small minority, who would not act in the trial, declared themselves the church, proceeded to try the accused, acquitted him, and then elected him their pastor. A committee of council—a merely advisory measure, having no authority and no jurisdiction over any case whatever—was called from other churches, which sustained the action of the minority: but the General Convention of delegates from the churches, which, however, has no authority over such cases, elected as their Moderator the pastor of the majority, who conducted the prosecution. Is there any government here? Is there any

power or authority anywhere in such a system? It would seem that there is none. We differ from all these in the most ample security given to the rights of private members, and, at the same time, in the efficiency of the government. The right of appeal is given to all.

The members support the preachers by the system of voluntary contributions. They can give or withhold, as they please. It is in their power at any time to cut off the supplies, and virtually but effectually silence and dismiss their pastor. Dependent upon their liberality, the preacher is to a considerable and important extent in their power. His own and the wants of his family are supplied by his flock, and when he acts in an improper manner, or assumes too much authority, they can very easily and quietly make him conscious of the transgression. In this way the Methodist ministry is held back, and the membership guarded from oppressive and improper exercise of power. This will always protect us.

But other Churches practice the pew system, which takes this check out of the hands of the people. Methodism has a government which beautifully incorporates more of the popular element than almost any other Church, and yet is more efficient, and works more powerfully and with less friction, than any other Church government with which I am acquainted. For this reason, it promotes the prosperity of the Church, and it has always flourished.

There is great efficiency in this government, for the simple reason that power is properly distributed. The members hold their rights independent of the ministers, and, if they choose, can, by withholding a support, drive the ministers away: the ministers have the right to nominate stewards, and appoint leaders, and exercise a general oversight. The members give up their right to select their ministers, and the ministers give up their right to choose their fields of labor. The Bishop, with the presiding

elders, has the power of stationing the preachers as the work demands; but the preachers or people can complain of the Bishop's course, and have him tried for it, while he has no vote in any Conference, and no right to speak except by courtesy. There never was before such a balance and distribution of power. It is this which renders our government so efficient and strong, and our system so successful. I trust no ecclesiastical Uzzah will ever put his hand upon our ark to steady it by his changes, but that we shall hand it down to other generations unimpaired in strength and still wonderful in working.

This system, which Divine Providence has so beautifully developed, is remarkably like that which providentially grew up in the Church of the apostles. Three things distinguish both: Episcopacy, Itinerancy, and the social character of the piety of the Church.

We have *Bishops*, and so had the ancient Church, as left by the apostles. The

New Testament frequently mentions the "Bishops." The Methodist Bishops are much like those of the New Testament in purity of character and abundant labors. One of our Bishops "crossed the Alleghanies sixty times, penetrating into the vast wilderness, travelled about two hundred and seventy thousand miles, mostly on horseback and on the worst roads, often slept in the woods and waded swamps, preached not less than sixteen thousand four hundred and twenty-five sermons, and ordained more than four thousand ministers." It is stated that Mr. Wesley himself "preached forty thousand sermons, travelled two hundred and twenty thousand miles, and gave to charitable purposes more than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars." and died full of faith and hope, leaving but little more than enough to defray his funeral expenses. Bishop McKendree, describing his labors, said: "Houses were scarce, and accommodations poor. There were few if any roads, and neither

ferries nor bridges: so we rode all day, and forded or swam the streams as we came to them. At night we built us a fire, tied our horses out to grass, cooked our supper, prayed and praised, and then lay down to rest, with our saddles for our pillows, and our cloaks to cover us. We slept sweetly till morning, and then arose, prepared our breakfast, prayed, and praised the Lord, and went on our way happy in God." I ask if such men are not the successors of the ancient Bishops of the New Testament in a sense that is worthy of consideration? Such are Methodist Bishops: not with little narrow dioceses, but preaching and laboring from East to West, from North to South—now in Virginia, then in Kansas; now in Florida, then in Texas; now in Kentucky, then in California; often from home for many months together; and receiving a salary much less than that which many merchants pay their clerks!

Methodist ministers are *itinerants*, as were the apostles and New Testament

ministers. We have indeed local preachers, who, from their domestic or business arrangements, prefer to remain in one place, and preach as they have opportunity, receiving no salaries, because their preaching does not interfere with their professional engagements or their employments. The regular ministers are itinerant, and they hold themselves in readiness to go wherever the work most needs their services. The world and ease are given up, and, with the motto, "All for Christ," they go forth singing,

"No foot of land do I possess,  
No cottage in this wilderness:  
A poor wayfaring man,  
I lodge a while in tents below,  
Or gladly wander to and fro,  
Till I my Canaan gain."

Settled ministers labor under great disadvantages. They soon wear out, or, from entanglements with local affairs and business matters, lose, in great measure, their influence with many. One man's talents cannot suit the different orders of mind

and habits of thought in a community, and for this reason itinerancy is far preferable, with its changes. No one man combines in himself all the varied qualifications of preacher, pastor, teacher, and governor of the church, and, therefore, it is not best for one man to remain long in one place. The people generally are more easily moved by a new preacher than by one with whom long acquaintance has rendered them familiar. To preserve the ardor of feeling, the glow and freshness of spirit, and the bold, earnest zeal of the ministry, they must be often changed, otherwise they will fall into the coldness and stale weakness of settled preachers. The travelling preacher is hardly long enough in one place to get into the low spiritual state of the people, or to be driven into the tameness of despondency, produced inevitably where men labor long without much fruit; but going on from place to place, and preaching, visiting, and praying with all classes, he is always fresh and earnest, and full



of boldness for Christ, “ready for every good word and work.” This is one great means of our wonderful success. The spirit of the ministry is imparted to the Church, and that freshness and active zeal is repeated in the laity; and it wins the hearts of sinners, while it gives us an influence of great power over all.

The itinerancy is not of modern date: Jesus was a travelling preacher, and went from city to city preaching the gospel of the kingdom. The prophets were travelling preachers. Samuel travelled a “circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh; and his return was to Ramah.” The apostles were travelling preachers, and had “no certain dwelling-place.” Beyond a doubt, itinerancy is the best plan for spreading the gospel that is known to the Church. It does not wait for a call from the people, and the promise of a sufficient salary; but goes wherever there is destitution, seeking the people, and following the pioneer into the forest to tell him about the riches of grace. With

horse and saddlebags, containing a few clothes, a Bible, and a hymn-book, the preacher is ready to go to the rice plantations, the wire-grass regions, the Western prairies, or plunge into the forests after the solitary settlers. Nor does he pause to ask about support, for his wants are few, and the "love of Christ constraineth" him. He studies the word of God, asking, with a faith to which your kid-gloved clergyman is a stranger, the enlightening aid of the Holy Spirit, and receiving views of Divine truth of which your city pastor, with his musty volumes, never dreamed. He studies nature in her various moods, and grows familiar with the grandeur, beauty, and sublimity which are around him, so often as to enlarge his soul and inspire his mind with lofty thoughts. He studies human nature in the palace of the master and the cabin of the slave, and reads the same volume by the fireside of the hunter and the laborer, and the bedside of the sick and dying. Such are Methodist ministers.

The social religious life of the Apostolic Church and that of the Methodist Church bear a close resemblance. The love-feast was held by the ancient Christians, and St. Jude calls it a feast of charity, which, in the original, is love. He speaks of it in the *plural*, as being often held in his day. It was continued in the Church until the love which it signified grew cold. St. Chrysostom says, "It is a custom most beautiful and beneficial, for it is a supporter of love, a solace of poverty, and a discipline of humility." Reference is made to love-feasts by Tertullian, in his Apology, and by the Apostolic Constitutions. The love-feasts, then, is not an invention of Mr. Wesley, but dates back to the days of the apostles. Formerly it was a feast literally, but now we have only bread and water, in token of mutual affection, and then we rise one after another to tell our religious experience; and this, with singing and prayer, is all that is done.

The class-meeting is a means of grace

of great value. It is a test of religious character in the Church. It is necessary to have such a test; and the other Churches, while they have tests of *moral* character, can scarcely be said to have any test of *religious* experience and character. How important a consideration this is, must appear to all who are convinced that *religious* and not simply *moral* character qualifies for Church-membership. This accounts for a fact that cannot fail to have been observed by nearly all conversant with religious matters: Persons remain in all the other Churches who have evidently no more than a fair *moral character*; while, as soon as persons become conscious of the loss of *religious experience and character* in the Methodist Church, they generally leave it. This is a striking fact. It is because in the Methodist, as there should be in all Churches, there is a test of *religious experience and character*; and that test is the class-meeting.

It is founded upon the clearest princi-

ples and plainest requirements of the Bible. For public worship, as we conduct it, there is no express command, and not more sanction than for class-meeting. In ancient times, meetings almost precisely the same as our class-meetings were held frequently. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." The disciples often held meetings after the ascension of Christ that bear a very strong likeness at least to our class-meeting, and must have been the same thing, without the name and the precise form. "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brethren." But we afterwards learn that those meetings were not simply prayer-meetings, for they conversed and exhorted one another, confessed their faults one to another, and

prayed one for another. "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another," etc. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another." Christian fellowship and conversation is one of the most important and useful means of religious improvement, and, joined with self-examination and prayer, reading the Scripture, exhortation, confession of our faults to each other, and singing hymns and spiritual songs, must be a means of grace of incalculable value; and such is the class-meeting. It is a combination of nearly every means of grace, and must, therefore, be of vast influence in aiding us in the Divine life. The practical working of the system justifies the opinion that it is the best training-school for Christians in the world. In the class-meeting they weekly examine themselves, and thus learn to know themselves; and there they hear the experience of others, so that they can form a proper view of their own condition, and

be most likely to have any errors into which they may have fallen corrected. Moreover, by this familiar, conversational meeting they learn the religious state and trials of their brethren and sisters, and can sympathize, converse with, and pray for them understandingly; and, at the same time, they learn to love those as Christian brethren with whom they meet in such religious intimacy and confidence; and, by speaking in these little gatherings, they gain confidence to speak a word in season, and gain that courage so necessary in every follower of Christ. What a race of Christians the old Methodists were! They were proverbial for piety and zeal—truly a “peculiar people, zealous of good works.” They attributed their piety under God to the class-meeting system, and loved it as the best meeting in the world. They stand, therefore, as a proof of the beneficial character of class-meetings.

Methodists are not the only persons who have discovered the importance of

such meetings. The other denominations sometimes hold similar meetings, which they call "conference meetings," or "experience meetings," or "social meetings." A committee of the English Convocation recommended to the Church of England the formation of religious fraternities for the benefit of young converts—something similar to classes. A writer in the North British Review, noticing this fact, called attention to class-meetings, saying they "supply a want of the soul, which is a real and frequent one." A distinguished Presbyterian minister once said to a Methodist clergyman, "Sir, I believe your class-meetings are the very sinews of your Church." Dr. Wayland, a celebrated Baptist divine, says: "The Methodist class-meeting is an institution specially designed to gather together the scattered members of that communion into an organization that shall be the nucleus of a Church. It is an admirable system, and has been of infinite service in developing ministerial talent, and ex-



tending the cause of Methodism in our country. It has done much more than this. In ten thousand instances it has kept alive the flame of piety, where it would otherwise have been extinguished, and trained up thousands and tens of thousands for the heavenly Jerusalem."

It is related of the justly distinguished Moses Stuart, who was a Congregationalist, that, while on a visit to a friend, he attended a class-meeting with him, and, after the meeting was closed, said: "Well, sir, this is what you call class-meeting, is it? Now I know why your people are generally so much more deeply experienced in the things of God, and more zealous, than other Christians. The secret is found in the class-meeting."

Never neglect your class. It may prove a cross at first, but do not fail to bear the cross. It will soon become the most refreshing and improving service of the Church. Resolutely and perseveringly attend the class-meeting, and you will gradually become strong in the Lord,

and ready for every good word and work. Your profiting will appear unto all. If you desire to become a happy and useful Christian, you cannot find greater assistance than the class-meeting affords. It is impossible regularly to attend, with sincere heart, and not grow in grace. It will either make you holier, or drive you from it. If you persevere resolutely, its influence will soon appear in your increased spirituality and zeal. Wonderful men of God have been made such by the repeated baptisms of the Spirit received at class-meetings; and Methodism owes her success, under God, very greatly to her *itinerancy and class-meetings*; and these are inseparable: one seems to contemplate the other; and each appears necessary to the other. The class-meeting raises the piety to that point at which, if there is a Divine call to the sacred office, it will be felt, and recognized, and yielded to; and when the newly called minister will have grace to be bold, fervent, and active in his great work. More-

over, the class-meeting develops and trains talent, and gives the necessary courage, with that most important knowledge, an acquaintance with religious experience, which is of vastly more value to the Christian minister than all the languages together. Thus the class-meeting is the feeder or nursery for the itinerancy, without which it must ever be poorly supplied. Theological schools may meet some wants of the present day, but for the itinerancy the class-meeting must ever remain the special and best training-school; and in the absence of the peculiar training which it gives, no man, however qualified otherwise, is ready to enter the Methodist itinerancy. Our Church must suffer greatly in the character and labor of her ministers, when, if ever, class-meetings shall be given up. The glory of Methodism hovers around the class-meeting, and will depart with it. While our itinerancy remains, the class-meeting must also continue as the school of instruction and training, and the place

of spiritual oversight for the growing membership.

The Church is going back to the New Testament teaching in two respects: The ministry is learning more and more the importance of *preaching* as the divinely-appointed means of bringing sinners to Christ; and the Church is at last receiving the impression that *lay-agency* is necessary to the proper success of Christianity. The great work of the ministry is preaching—preaching from place to place—preaching with power the great doctrines of the cross; and the great work of the laity is home activity and enterprise in the cause of Christ. A preaching ministry and a laboring membership is the New Testament idea of a perfect Christian Church. Such a Church Methodism is prepared to develop in the system which we have adopted—an itinerant ministry, and class-meetings for the pastoral care and training of members.

Class-meetings sustain a most import-

ant relation to the whole economy of Methodism, and cannot be abolished or modified without involving most serious changes in the whole system. Itinerancy is dependent upon it for the pastoral care and training which, to a certain extent, it must neglect while going from place to place, preaching the glorious gospel. Even if the itinerancy is modified, which is but a step toward abolishing it altogether, and will lead to it ultimately, if not checked in time, even then pastoral attention is nothing like so profitable and useful as the weekly class-meeting. A pastor's visits once a month, or, as is often the case, a few times during the year, and then resulting in nothing more than a little desultory religious conversation and a short prayer, are not to be compared to the work of the weekly class-meeting. It is far the best pastoral system in the world. Then, too, we receive persons into the Church on probation, some of whom do not profess justification, while all are weak and inexperi-

enced. For these some such plan as that of class-meeting is necessary, in order to encourage, strengthen, instruct, and urge them on in the sacred cause. There is no other Church that could safely adopt our system of receiving persons on probation, because no other Church has a system of training and pressing them forward as we have. But, with the class-meeting, we are prepared to take such, and, by its instructions, exhortations, and examinations, they rapidly grow in grace. If we suffer class-meetings to go out of use, we must refuse to receive any into the Church but those who give satisfactory evidences of regeneration. But were we to receive none others, we should need the class-meeting for their religious improvement, and to impart strength to their Christian character, and inspire courage to labor zealously for Christ. Here they learn to speak in the presence of others, and gradually become free from that "fear of man which bringeth a snare." After a season they are called

upon to pray in the little gathering, until they become bold soldiers of Jesus Christ. This is the Methodist normal school for the training of ministers; and we shall never lack men for our posts of the right stamp while we keep the class-meetings in successful operation. There is great complaint of the want of ministers in many parts of our work. The reason is obvious: we are not using the proper means. Our great ministerial training-school is suffered to decline. The remedy is not theological schools, but a revival of class-meetings. Put these in full operation, and very soon the men will begin to say, "Here are we; send us."

The class-meeting is the best financial system the Church ever had. The old rule was that every member should contribute something, if only a penny, every week at the class-meeting. This produced systematic beneficence, and was a proper cultivation of the principle of benevolence; and, in addition to this most worthy result, it led every member

to give something. How different this from that system by which money is obtained by extra spasmodic efforts, and then from only the few! The few support the Church, and upon them rests all the burden. Even if they were able and willing, this is not right, nor is it best for the piety of the whole. To give is the duty of all, to the measure of their ability, and is a means of grace for the benefit of all. All the members of the Church should give something for the cause of Christ, and thereby they will not only benefit themselves and do good, but they will feel identified with and interested in the enterprises of the Church. How easily all this is accomplished at the weekly class-meeting! It would be no trouble to raise money quietly, and from religious motives, by this system; and we should avoid the disagreeable public appeals so often made, and with such little tendency to the development of the principle of benevolence. By this old system, we can, without any public ex-



citement, reach every member of the Church in all the Connection, simply by means of the preachers communicating with the leaders, and the leaders with the classes. Let us love and cherish this valuable means of grace, and do all in our power to make it universally prized and attended. Never abandon your class.

## CHAPTER VI.

## PROBATIONERS.

PERSONS in good standing in other orthodox Churches are received into the full fellowship of the Methodist Church at once; but those who are not members of any Church are received on probation. This is a period of trial, designed to guard against receiving into the fellowship of the Church those unworthy persons whose impressions are as temporary as the "morning cloud and early dew." Therefore we take none into full connection until they "be recommended by a leader with whom they have met in class at least six months," and "give satisfactory assurances, both of the correctness of their faith, and their willingness to observe and keep the rules of the Church."

To join as a probationer, it is required that you “desire to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from your sins.” If this is your desire, the Church is the place for you, because, by joining it, you leave your former course, and abandon the world; and here you have great aid in the prayers, counsels, and fellowship of the pious, the restraints of the Church, and pastoral attention. It is self-evident that those who wish to become religious should join the society of the religious. When men resolve to accomplish any great work, they organize a society, if there is not one already in existence, in order the more effectually to carry out their purposes; and from this great principle, that association gives strength and aid, arise so many societies in this age. Man is naturally weak, has a great enemy to contend with, and finds discouragements and difficulties in all his efforts to become a Christian. He needs all the help the Church can give; and the Church was instituted for the purpose of

binding up the "bruised reed," ministering to the wounded traveller, and carrying the lambs in her bosom. Who shall say that the sincere seeker of religion ought not to enter the fold and enjoy the protection of the Great Shepherd, the instruction of pastors, and the encouragement and companionship of the sheep? Such are far more worthy of membership in the Church than multitudes in those Churches who cry out against their admission. To my mind, it is evident that they will more likely persevere *in* the Church than if *out* of it. The Bible does not anywhere prohibit their joining; but, on the contrary, Christ, the Head of the Church, invites them to come to him.

The apostles were in the Church long before they understood the nature of true religion. They thought Christ was going to establish a great earthly kingdom, and knew not the spiritual character of his religion until long after they joined his Church. The first members

were all called “disciples,” that is, *persons learning* the great first principles of religion. At Samaria, a large number became penitent, and joined the Church; and when Peter and John visited them, they “prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” When Paul visited Ephesus, he found “certain disciples,” and “said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” Here, then, were “disciples” at Samaria and at Ephesus, who, though in the Church, had not received the Holy Ghost, by whom alone could they be born again. Is not joining the Church a duty, as well as prayer and reading the Bible? if so, how is it that the penitent is to neglect one duty and perform another—is told to pray, but not to join the Church yet? By what authority do men put one duty

before another, and require men to wait before they obey a law of God? But why need we reason upon so plain a matter? The other denominations say they receive none but those who are regenerated. What do they call *regeneration*? What evidences do they require of those who join their Churches? Do they profess to have the *knowledge of sins forgiven*? Do they tell *when and where they felt a change of heart and received the witness of adoption*? Do they refer to the *experience they have of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and the love of God shed abroad in their hearts*? Not many of them do this. In fact, their standard of conversion is far below that of the Bible and the Methodist Church. Those whom we receive as seekers of religion, they would call regenerated; and, while we only receive them on trial, they would take them into full membership. How often a little seriousness, with a resolution to do better, occasioned by sickness, the death of

a near relative, or some calamity, is all the evidence of conversion given by those who join these Churches! How many are there who candidly acknowledge that they have never experienced any such thing as a change of heart! How many are there who even ridicule the witness of the Spirit, and declare that they do not believe a man can “know that he has passed from death unto life,” although, in so doing, they contradict an inspired apostle! St. John said: “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” St. Paul gives a true idea of conversion in this: “Being justified by faith, we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the *love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*.” But any one acquainted with the manner of receiving members

into other Churches, must notice that they receive many who have not now, nor ever had, such an experience.

The custom of receiving seekers of religion into the Church is no new thing, as we have already shown from the Scriptures. It was the custom of the ancient Church. Origen tells us that in his day they “inquired into their lives and carriages, to discover their *seriousness* in the profession of Christianity during their being catechumens,” (probationers,) and when they were satisfied of their “*true repentance and reformation of life*, then they were admitted to the participation of our mysteries.” Stillingfleet, in his admirable *Irenicum*, says: “I nowhere find that ever Christ or his apostles, in making disciples, or admitting to Church-membership, did exact any more than a professed willingness to adhere to the doctrine which they preached; nor that they refused any one who did declare their desire to join with them. An owning Christianity is all we read of antecedent



to admission of Church members." Again he says: "For when once the mind of any rational man is so far wrought upon by the influence of the Divine Spirit as to discover the most rational and undoubted evidences which there are of the truth of Christianity, he is presently obliged to profess Christ openly, to worship him solemnly, to assemble with others for instruction and participation of gospel ordinances." This I believe to be the doctrine of the Church of England, of which Stillingfleet was so distinguished an ornament, and of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country. The terms of membership in the Lutheran Church are defined in these words: "They shall be obedient subjects of Divine grace; that is, they must either be genuine Christians, or satisfy the Church-council that they are sincerely endeavoring to become such."

This is without doubt the true doctrine—the doctrine of Christ and of the apostles, in whose view the Church was

established as a means of grace, a school of instruction, and a place of spiritual improvement.

It is wise, however, to have, as with us, a term of probation, of longer or shorter duration, during which period we can test the sincerity and firmness of those who wish to enjoy Church-fellowship. Many deceive themselves or are deceived as to the character of their impressions and feelings, and in a short time they are as thoughtless as ever before. Many suffer themselves to be carried forward by the impulse of a general excitement, who have not seriously considered the matter. It is wise, therefore, to keep such on trial for a season, which is to take them as candidates for Church-fellowship, and during this period to give them all possible assistance. As candidates, they may at any time be dismissed for sufficient reason without a formal trial.

To the probationer it is proper to say, the term of your probation will soon expire, and then, if you have been dili-

gent in attending to your religious duties, you may be received into full membership in the Church of God. At that time, if the pastor does not mention it, remind him of it. You must not, however, suppose that in the mean time you are not expected to go forward in working out your salvation. On the contrary, you are admitted to a place among us in order that you may be aided in that great work, and you are expected and required to go forward, and not be content without obtaining the pearl of great price. You should seek religion with all your might, and use every endeavor to obtain a satisfactory experience of Divine grace. Pray earnestly and perseveringly, seek the advice of others, search the Scriptures daily, fast, and use all the means of grace at your command, trusting in Jesus, and waiting patiently for the Lord to "hear your cry," and take you out of the horrible pit, and set your feet upon a rock.

If any join on trial, and then relapse

into coldness and indifference, they abuse their privileges, trifle with the Church of God, and commit a grievous sin. Think not for a moment of leaving the Church at the expiration of the six months of your trial, but reflect that you stand committed to God, to the Church, and to the world, and should not entertain the temptation which suggests that you quietly withdraw. It is the temptation of an enemy—your greatest foe—and should meet a prompt and decided resistance. Having put your hands to the plough, never look back. “Remember Lot’s wife,” who became a pillar of salt, to warn every one against the sin and dreadful consequences of backsliding. “Go on” is the voice of conscience, of truth, of prudence, and of God. “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee; nor stay in all the plain.” Go from the outer court into the holy place of full communion, and then press on to the most holy place, where stands the Church triumphant. The whole Church is on trial

here, and the finally faithful will be received into full-membership in the glorious Church above!

“The holy to the holiest leads,  
From thence our spirits rise;  
And he that in Thy statutes treads,  
Shall meet Thee in the skies.”

It is an exceedingly hazardous thing for a person to begin to seek the Lord, and then become careless on the subject. It is a sin of no ordinary degree. It involves very serious consequences, and generally results most disastrously for the soul. Prepare, then, to enter the full communion of the Church at the close of your period of probation, or ask for an extension of the time. Pray earnestly for grace, that you may take the solemn vows of membership in the proper spirit, and be enabled to live in accordance with your obligations. Not lightly, or from worldly considerations, should any man dare to enter the sacred enclosure of membership in the Church of God. The hypocrite, the worldly, or

those who would profess religion in order to prop a falling reputation or gain popularity and patronage, have no business in the Church of God; and their entrance is bold presumption and a daring intrusion. To them we say, "Afar off, afar off, O ye profane!" But to the humble and penitent, who pray and look to a higher Power for assistance to meet the responsibility of the holy position, we cordially extend a welcome, and say, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." You may feel your weakness, and, in view of the high character which a Church member should maintain, may exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Paul made the same exclamation, but in view of the sufficiency of Divine grace added, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." Perfectly known unto God are all your difficulties, infirmities, and temptations, and he says, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Think not

so much of future failures, but trust Him who said, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be." Do not magnify your difficulties, for "if the Lord be for us, who can be against us?" Talk not so much about your weakness, but remember the exhortation, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Fear not, but "cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee;" for "they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever."

"The soul that on Jesus *still* leans for repose,  
He will not, he will not desert to his foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
He'll never, *no, never*, NO, NEVER forsake."

## CHAPTER VII.

THE DUTIES OF MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST  
CHURCH.

THE name of Methodist was given to the Wesleys and others because they lived by method and rule. They endeavored to “redeem the time” and improve every hour, by assigning to it its appropriate work. They began the day by reading the Scriptures and prayer, and apportioned out every hour to some useful employment. For this they were called in derision Methodists. They retained the name, and taught their followers to become Methodists in the same sense. The practical teaching of Methodism has always set forth the same great duty. In this it is not only in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, but also with



the great law of success in every department of life. To succeed well in any thing, whether it be the labor of the farm or shop, the office or the studio, the forum or the senate, it is necessary to be methodical. Without this, much in some instances has been accomplished, but nothing in comparison with what might have been done by a different course.

Method is economy in time and labor, and thus of vast worth. The business man cannot dispense with it. Can it be that it is of little importance in religion? Nay, it is of great consequence, and should be cultivated. Have your times for rising and retiring, for reading and praying, for meals, for labor, for visiting and recreation, and for whatever else is to be done. Frequently the habit of late rising prevents any regularity in the household. Then it is hurrying in dressing, hurrying through private devotions, with no time to read, and no time for family prayer, and the whole family is in confusion for the day. Many live in this

way all the time, and it is no wonder that they do not prosper in religion. They sit up late at night, and frequently spend hours, designed by their Maker for sleep, in dissipation, in light and trifling conversation, and the result is impaired health, indicated by a feverish, restless state of the body, which leads them to use artificial stimulants, and renders them irritable and peevish, and unfits them for religious duties. They are up late, and require their servants to be up as late attending to their wants, but they do not allow them to sleep as late as they, nor give them opportunity to sleep in the day; and in this they oppress them by robbing them of that rest which nature demands, and which God designed them to have. Rising late, they cannot train their children to habits of early rising and industry, and thus give them strong and vigorous constitutions; but, on the contrary, lay in them the foundation of dyspepsia, consumption, and almost every form of disease. The irregular habits of

fashionable life are sinful, and should be avoided by those especially who call themselves *Methodists*. But we have in too many instances forgotten our name and profession.

Soon after the name of Methodist was applied to the young men at Oxford, it took a secondary meaning, which became in a short time the chief signification. It came to mean any one who sought after more than ordinary piety, and was applied to all of every denomination who gave evidence of religious zeal and personal piety. Churchman or Dissenter, it mattered not which, if he was self-denying, devotional, and active in religion, he was called a Methodist. The reason of this was, that those who originally and still bore the name, were distinguished by great earnestness and fervor of spirit, and sought diligently after holiness of heart and life. They preached and talked of holiness, sung hymns breathing the spirit of holiness, and prayed with all prayer and supplication for holiness. John Wes-

ley most beautifully embodied the desire of those Methodists for inward purity in these lines :

“Holy Lamb, who thee receive,  
Who in thee begin to live,  
*Day and night they cry to thee,*  
*As thou art, so let us be!*  
Jesus, see my panting breast!  
See, I pant in thee to rest!  
*Gladly would I now be clean;*  
*Cleanse me now from every sin.”*

Charles Wesley gives their ardent aspiration after the fulness of grace in this stanza of entire consecration to God:

“Take my soul and body’s powers;  
Take my mem’ry, mind, and will;  
All my goods, and all my hours;  
All I know, and all I feel;  
All I think, or feel, or do:  
Take my heart; but make it new.”

This intense longing for the spiritual life is found in all their conduct, conversations, and writings, as well as in their sermons and prayers. It inspired the whole number, and they were of one heart and mind. It changed their whole

life, and gave them an earnest, but cheerful and happy piety. They breathed out their life in doing good, in talking of religious joys, and in singing such hymns of glowing hope as the world never heard until Methodism inspired them.

We should never forget the old definition of our name, nor let it cease to be applicable. Methodists are thus, by profession, *holy men and women*, and are united for the purpose "of spreading scriptural holiness over these lands." This is our profession and our work. We need to be reminded of this, and to have it ever before us. Holiness is our great want. We hear much and read much of the "wants of the Church," of the "preaching for the times," of the "laity for the times," and of the changes necessary to make our system more popular and efficient. Few, if any, are the changes needed in our system. It grew up under the providence of God, has worked admirably and with wonderful success, is well balanced and nicely ad-

justed in all its parts, and needs very little, if any, repairing. If we can only have the piety which our system demands and contemplates, we shall always prosper. But to keep up class-meetings, itinerancy, and our episcopacy, requires a holy and self-denying ministry and membership. *We need more religion.* This is the great want of the Church and of the times. If we had more piety—if the whole Church were truly converted and full of the Holy Ghost, there would be little need of changes of plans and systems; the ministry would have power and great success, the members would be consistent, zealous, and active, and all the interests of the Church would look up. Too great laxity in administering discipline, too little discrimination in receiving persons into the Church, and the prevalence of a style of so-called “practical preaching,” which is a sort of diluted morality without the foundation of doctrine or the motive of experience, and is exceedingly unfavorable to the develop-

ment of a healthy and vigorous piety—these have been causes of the sad decline too evident among us. Once “Methodist” was a name given to men supposed to have “overmuch religion,” but now it suggests no such idea. Worldliness has crept into the Church, and brought with it a multitude of evils, until many Methodists are no better than other people, and in some cases not so good. This is the disease in the heart that is working outwardly, rendering the body powerless by degrees. This is the inward indisposition that is changing and suiting the outward order to itself. This is the point where we are growing weaker and weaker. This is the place that requires remedy. The cries of dissatisfaction come from this quarter.

No Church can succeed in carrying on the work of Christ without an evangelical piety. Success depends upon the confidence of the people, and where this is wanting there can be no success. If the preacher cannot inspire the people with

confidence in his piety, no matter with what learning, with what ability, with what eloquence he preaches, it will be all in vain. His labors will effect nothing. Just so with every effort to induce men to embrace a religious profession. The Church may have members, wealth, talent, and great worldly influence, but if the people have no confidence in its piety, it will be powerless as far as their spiritual benefit is concerned. The past history of the Church illustrates this great truth. The success of the Church has always been in proportion to its piety. Holiness has been the secret of power, and power has been according to the degree of holiness. There has never been an exception. It is a fact in the history of every Church, and this, too, independent of organization and government. We often attribute the success of the Church to the system of government, to the character of doctrine, to the peculiarity of circumstances or men; but while something may be due to these causes,



success has been independent of them. Success has attended piety. Holiness has given power to the plainest men, to Arminian and Calvinistic preaching, to the simplest forms of government, and in the most diverse times. In the Church of Christ *holiness is power*, and there is no power without it.

If this is true generally, it is particularly so among us. The origin, structure, and government of the Methodist Church contemplate piety. The Church is built upon a living, active, powerful faith in Christ. This is its foundation. The whole machinery demands this faith, producing self-denial, humility, active zeal, and entire consecration. Without it our episcopacy, itinerancy, class-meetings, love-feasts, and revivals cannot long continue. The life of the whole system is holiness, without which it is a dead body, without power and useless. We may and should glory in our peculiar system. It is beyond question the best in the world for spreading scriptural holiness and calling men

to a religious life. But the secret of our past success is not in our system, but in the piety and zeal that worked the system. The machinery of an engine may be ever so perfect and well adapted to its purpose, but it is powerless without fire. The enginery of war may be all complete, and powder and ball and cannon may all be in their places, but all will prove useless if the fire cannot be applied. Our system is worthy of all praise, but without a holy ministry and membership it will accomplish but little. The future of our Church depends upon her piety. This is the key that unlocks the mystery of our future history. If Methodism continues pure, and Methodists remain a holy, self-denying, consecrated, actively pious people, it is impossible to predict the future of the Church. It will be a future covered with glory, and of distinguished success. It will be a future of great influence on other Churches, and of eminent power in winning souls and

developing piety. From the perfection of our system, we may indulge almost any expectations with regard to the future, if we are only faithful to our trust. Glorious future! if holiness shape it. If, on the other hand, there be a continued and gradual decline in piety, there will be either a gradual change of our system until the Church loses all that is peculiar to it at present, or it will be torn asunder by some dreadful internal commotion, or it will live a gigantic system of rationalism, a monster iceberg, freezing everything in contact with it. When we are no longer distinguished for piety, the "glory will depart," and "Ichabod" be legibly written upon our temples, and the Divine Shekinah forsake our altars for ever. Awful fate! May the God of our fathers avert it, and grant that ours may ever be the death-shout of Wesley: "The best of all is, God is with us!" May the mantle of the fathers fall with a double portion of their spirit upon the

children, and Wesley and Asbury realize a resurrection in their followers of every generation for ever.

This holiness must be sought as an *inward experience*, the assurance of Divine acceptance, and the daily consciousness of a spiritual life, a “hungering and thirsting after righteousness,” and the enjoyment of perfect love. This holiness is the life and power of the Church, the beauty and glory of religion. With it, we can do all things; without it, we are shorn of our strength, and weak as other men. This is the heroic element in the Church which produces self-denial, missionary zeal, fervent piety, and the martyr spirit. This is the wave of influence which is to sweep every thing before it. This is the beautiful garment of the Christian, the wedding-garment for the marriage of the Lamb.

The whole Church should be anxiously seeking after holiness by day and by night. Like David, we should “cry out for God, for the living God.” In all the

appointed ways we must earnestly seek after it. Holiness is a growth, whereby the principle of piety, by repeated exercise in holy deeds, gradually becomes strong, and develops itself more and more. This is not sufficiently regarded. Piety is an object of culture. Some are ever after extraordinary modes of attaining holiness, and neglecting the great means indicated by the laws of our nature and also by the Sacred Scriptures. At conversion, we have the germs of piety, the principle of true religion implanted within us. There must be a subsequent culture, training, and discipline of this principle. Self-denial, daily practiced, is necessary in order to keep down the growth of evil passions and tempers, to check the power of evil desires and inclinations, and prevent the world from gaining the ascendancy in our hearts. The proper religious truth must be constantly brought to bear upon our minds and hearts, in order to give encouragement, direction, and strength to the reli-

gious principle. Truth is light, and fire, and food: it instructs, warms, and invigorates, and nourishes the soul in the pursuit of good. The daily supply ought never to be neglected, but sought for in the Bible and in religious works; and we should be careful to digest well whatever truth we receive, by meditating on it, and thinking upon it. The advantages of attending preaching are very great, because there we have truth selected for us carefully by those who have experience in the religious life, and so presented as most likely to benefit us. But exercise is necessary to growth and improvement. The body is developed by exercise. The mind is improved by the daily exercise at school, and the student must go over the lesson until it is mastered. The arm becomes strong and brawny by the exercise of the blacksmith's shop; the eye is trained to great skill and precision of sight by the watchmaker's work; the nerves become remarkably steady by practice in shooting; and thus it is in

regard to every trade, and to all excellence. And to arrive at perfection in religion, requires training and exercise. The virtues cannot otherwise mature. Justice, temperance, faith, goodness, and all the graces of religion, need daily exercise. "Exercise thyself unto godliness," is the great law of religion. Embrace every opportunity of doing a favor, forgiving an injury, assisting an enemy, giving away something, denying an evil temper or passion, and performing a good work. If there is any virtue in the practice of which we are deficient, and with regard to which we have frequent occasions of self-condemnation, we should by all means give attention to exercising that virtue until it becomes strong and its exercise easy. To make any part of religion easy, we have only to practice it until it becomes habitual, and then it will be natural and pleasant. This is the difficulty with regard to praying in public and in the family, the virtue of giving to benevolent purposes, and religious zeal.

These are so much neglected, so seldom practiced, that it is hard to induce persons to do their duty. So it is with class-meetings and speaking in love-feasts. "Grow in grace," and "go on unto perfection."

Holiness should be sought by prayer for the influences of the Spirit. The Spirit is now given abundantly, for this is the dispensation of the Spirit. The great peculiarity of the New Testament is not the atonement, for that is revealed in the Old; nor is it the system of moral duties, for they are well defined in the Old; but it is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of his grace in abundant measures. This constitutes the great distinction of the present dispensation. The Spirit is offered "to them that ask him," with as much readiness as a father shows in giving bread to his children, and in measure like the flowing of "rivers of waters." The promise runs through the Gospels, and in the Gospel of John it becomes very distinct and plain;



but in the Acts and the Epistles the gift and grace of the Spirit are ever the theme. The Spirit is the "Sanctifier of the faithful," and is ready to pour streams of holy influence into our hearts, such as will greatly refresh, and encourage, and strengthen us. The Spirit is ready to "dwell in us richly," so that we may have the Divine "Comforter abide with us for ever," and be "filled with all the fulness of God." This is the secret of religious joy and prosperity, of eminent piety and usefulness. By the constant presence and grace of the Holy Spirit, we "can do all things," "bear all things," and work bravely and cheerfully in the cause of our Heavenly Master. It is a fire within us, a Divine power urging us forward, and inspiring the loftiest heroism. The baptism of the Spirit is the need of the times. It came upon the apostolic Church in answer to fervent and importunate prayer; and the result has been the wonder of ages. Great was the peace and joy of religious experience,

beautiful was the example of Christian purity, and wonderful was the success of the Church in winning souls to Christ! Converts were numbered by thousands, and, in turn, received the Spirit, and became "burning and shining lights." At times during the after history of the Church, a few sought the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and became greatly blessed, and a blessing to others. The great Reformation was another period when the Spirit was sought in preference to forms and unmeaning ceremonies, and a great and glorious work was accomplished. Mr. Wesley revived the great doctrine of the New Testament, and everywhere urged men to seek the witness and grace of the Spirit of God. Then let the whole Church earnestly seek the baptism of the Spirit, nay, repeated baptisms of the Spirit. Pray on, as did the eleven, in the "closet" or "upper room," in strong faith from day to day, until the power of God comes down upon you. Pray not one day only, nor two, nor three, nor six,

nor nine, but, as did the faithful eleven, until the answer comes.

Be an earnest and whole-souled Christian. There are too many who may be appropriately called *Sunday* professors, and others who are *revival* professors. They divorce religion from domestic arrangements and business affairs and social life, and confine it to a mere profession, going to church occasionally on Sunday, and shouting at camp-meeting. Alas for such! They can quarrel at home, maltreat their servants, half-feed and overwork them, neglect family prayer, and send their children to a dancing-school. These are all grievous evils. They can overreach in trade, make misrepresentations in selling their goods, vend spirituous liquors, violate their promises, and take advantage whenever they have an opportunity. They can go to dancing-parties, theatres and circuses, and sit for hours talking about their neighbors. They can buy most extravagantly, but have scarcely any thing to

bestow upon the poor, or to give for the cause of Christ. They can ride in carriages, and dress in silks, and live in style, but plead being in "debt" when asked to aid in some benevolent work. They can take up as much room in church as any others, and get offended if crowded, but contribute nothing to support the minister. They are the first to complain of "poor sermons," and of neglect in pastoral visiting, but the preacher might starve—and would, but for others. They complain that the members do not visit them, or do not patronize them in business, but the members never see them in prayer-meeting, nor meet them at class, nor find them visiting others simply as members. They can talk very well about religion, and speak of having such good impressions and feelings at church, but, alas, they never last until Monday! They can drink intoxicating beverages at parties, and perhaps at home also.

corrupts and weakens the Church, betrays the cause of Christ, defeats the labors of the ministry, and gives rise to infidelity. He who professes Christianity is under the most sacred obligations to God and to his fellow-man to live above reproach. The vows of God are upon him, and he stands before men the priest of nature and of God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world." Be careful therefore to cultivate an everyday religion—religion in the family, on the street, and everywhere!

Consecrate your life to good works. This is the highest and noblest aim of humanity. "Follow me," said Jesus; and he showed us an example of practical goodness never yet equalled. "He went about doing good." Poverty, sickness, suffering and sorrow fled at his approach, and where he went peace was found, and

joy sat smiling. The greatness of man among the creatures of God consists in the ability to appreciate and practice moral goodness. The loftiest conception of mind is that of goodness. It is the supreme excellence. Take the moral perfections from God—the goodness of his character—and what have you left to love? Much there may be in his natural attributes to inspire wonder and fear, but what is there to reverence and love?

——“Good,

Only, is great, and generous, and fruitful.”

We are so constituted as to render goodness a necessary virtue. We are dependent on the kind offices of others for a thousand comforts and pleasures. Sir Walter Scott said, “The race of mankind would perish, did we cease to help each other. From the time that the mother binds the child’s head, till the moment that some kind assistance wipes the death-damp from the brow of the dying, we cannot exist without mutual help.”

That which is so necessary, God has made the source of the purest pleasure. "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" and he who devotes his life to deeds of usefulness, experiences in the performance of every noble act a pleasure such as angels feel. John Howard gave this prescription for a heavy heart: "Set about doing good to somebody; visit the poor; inquire into their wants, and administer to them; seek out the desolate and oppressed, and tell them of the consolation of religion. I have often tried this, and found it the best medicine for a heavy heart." Lord Bacon says: "If there be a pleasure on earth which angels cannot enjoy, and which they might almost envy the possessor of, it is the power of relieving distress; if there be a pain which devils might pity man for enduring, it is the death-bed reflection that we have possessed the power of doing good, but that we have abused and perverted it to purposes of ill." The

whole Church has declared its faith in the pleasure of doing good in that favorite stanza of Watts :

“The men of grace have found  
Glory begun below :  
Celestial fruit on earthly ground  
From faith and hope may grow.”

Even the heathen know something about this rare enjoyment, for Confucius has this proverb : “The pleasure of doing good is the only one that never wears out.” This never grows less. Let your heart be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and always yield to His sacred promptings, and you will enjoy the fruit of the Spirit, which is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

To do good there are always opportunities, and he who desires to perform good works need not wait long nor go far to find occasions. “The poor shall never cease out of the land,” and the unfortunate are “always with us.” “He that hath two coats, let him give to him that



hath none." In the person of his poor and suffering followers, Christ represents himself as a-hungred, as thirsty, as naked, as sick, and in prison. If we neglect them, we neglect him ; if we minister to their wants, we do so to him. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

The Sabbath-school presents a beautiful and vast field "already white unto the harvest," where both "he that soweth, and he that reapeth, gather fruit unto life eternal." The children of our land must receive the lessons of heavenly truth from the Church, before the emissaries of Satan poison their minds with error and infidel principles, and before evil habits and associations are formed. We must take hold of childhood in the

name of Christ, and baptize it with truth and grace. Train up the children for Christ, and it will be comparatively easy to conquer the world, and bring it into submission to the Son of God. Great good may be done in the Sabbath-school by persevering efforts. In a Sabbath-school Convention recently held, one brother arose and made this statement:

“Less than ten miles from this place, and less than ten years ago, I had charge of a congregation where there was a Sunday-school of eighty or one hundred children, with not more than one of the teachers a member of the Church. Before the close of the year I witnessed the conversion of all the teachers, and some dozen or twenty of the scholars. I took the superintendent into the Church; he became a minister, and is now a member of this body.”

Another said,

“In the past ten years we have sent forth more than a dozen ministers of the gospel. This fact alone encourages us.

I used to think, in reviewing our school, noticing that we always numbered about one hundred and fifty scholars, that we were doing a small work; but when I remembered that we were sending out ministers and others to extend and build up the Church, I felt that we were doing a great work, and that we must never shrink from it. When I was born again, love for the Sunday-school was born in me. I felt it the very next Sabbath. For the last sixteen years I have had no inclination to depart from the Sunday-school, and have felt that I had no right to do so."

And another said,

"I love the Sunday-school. I was connected with it when young, and so long as God shall spare my life I expect to be engaged in it. Though we have labored under embarrassments from removals, we number in the white school about one hundred and fifty-six scholars, and twenty teachers. We have two Bible-classes—one male, and one female. Our infant class numbers upwards of

fty. I look upon that as the most important feature of our school. The most of the teachers have been trained up in the school from little children. In it they have become disciples of Christ. We do not value Sunday-school instructions as we should. In the Methodist Church, North, last year, thirty-two thousand Sunday-school children were converted. Let us look for conversions. Let us have more faith. I believe I could take up the whole afternoon in giving incidents in connection with our Sunday-school. A young man, who was not a member of the Church, was urged to take a class in our Sunday-school. After a while he consented, and taught some six months. Seeing the inconsistency of teaching that which he did not understand, he soon became a converted person."

Surely such facts are abundantly sufficient to encourage us in Sabbath-school labor. It is one of the most interesting fields we can cultivate, and it yields a large return for our efforts.

There are many who wish to do good, but they desire to do some great thing. This is well, if at the same time the "small, sweet courtesies of life" are not neglected, and the less ostentatious ways of doing good are not slighted. If we are "faithful in that which is least," we should be also in that which is greatest. If you are able to do so, by all means build a church, found a college, endow a professorship, send some poor man's children to school, aid some poor minister, support a missionary to the heathen, or any such noble and truly great work. This is something worthy of living for, and thus we make our wealth a blessing, while we build for ourselves a monument more durable than brass. But let us by no means "despise the day of small things." There is true nobleness in visiting the sick, praying with them, and reading the Bible in the cabin of the negro. The sun blesses the earth by his millions of rays and the dew by its millions of little drops, and thus the good

man diffuses happiness around him by the gentleness and cheerfulness of his spirit, by a smile for all, and a kind word spoken in season. A good book sent with prayer for God's blessing upon it, a little tract, an affectionate word of exhortation, often do great good. Dr. Dewey has somewhere said,

“I say the million occasions will come varying every hour, in which you may restrain your passions, subdue your hearts to gentleness and patience, resign your own interests to another's advantage, speak words of kindness and wisdom, raise the fallen, cheer the fainting and sick in spirit, and soften and assuage the weariness and bitterness of the mortal lot. These cannot, indeed, be written on your tombs, for they are not one series of specific actions, like those of what is technically denominated philanthropy. But in them, I say, you may discharge offices not less glorious for yourselves than the self-denials of the far-famed Sisters of Charity, than the labors of Ho-

ard or Oberlin, or than the sufferings of the martyred host of God's elect. They shall not be written on your tombs, but they are written in the hearts of men, of friends, of children, of kindred all around you ; they are written in the sacred book of the great account."

This is well said. Practical goodness is made up of these little but not unimportant acts, performed every day in the family, and in the business relations of life. Herein is true heroism displayed, and the beauty of a Christian life exhibited.

The family at morning and evening devotions, led by the father or mother, is a lovely sight, such as angels might pause to behold, and delight to report in heaven. This family religion is a duty—a part of practical piety that is too often neglected by the fathers and mothers of this day. Boldly taken up and faithfully persevered in, it leads to the best of consequences, becoming an effectual means of grace to them and to the whole house-

hold. Many a child has been led to Christ, and many have been strengthened in their purposes to do right, by the remembrance of the prayers of the family altar. Never be without such an altar in your house.

In every way "show your faith by your works." The example of Job is worthy of consideration. What consolation it must have afforded him to be able to say, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had no helper. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out." This is true greatness. Such goodness is a crown of glory and a fountain of joy. When I die, let the poor be the chief mourners, and my grave be watered by the tears of the widows, and



the fatherless visit my tomb as that of their friend and protector. This is glory enough. Be good, and you shall be great.

Let me advise you to habits of searching the Scriptures. There God has placed before us precept and promise, exhortation and warning, expostulation and entreaty, example and illustration, in various forms best adapted to stir us up and move our hearts to duty. In the company of Abraham, Moses, Job, Daniel, Paul, and John, you cannot fail to improve in piety. In the presence of Jesus, from day to day, and listening to his wisdom, there must be spiritual advancement. "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." The heart is sanctified "through the truth," and for this reason we should keep the truth before our minds, so that we may always be under its influence. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word."

“Blessed is the man” whose “delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” Let no day pass, therefore, without reading some portion of Scripture; and read it regularly through once a year, beginning at Genesis. By reading three or four chapters daily, the work of reading the Bible through will be accomplished every year.

Habits of prayer should be cultivated. Three times a day the child of God should meet his Father on his knees, and ask his blessing. Many have a foolish habit of praying on their beds rather than kneel before others. No matter who is in the room, get on your knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. A greater than man has said, “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my

Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

There is not prayer enough in the religion of this day. Prayer must constitute a chief element in the character of every growing and useful Christian. Not only is "a prayerless soul a Christless soul," but it is also true that every eminent Christian is eminently a praying man. David prayed seven times a day, and Daniel, besides fastings and prayers on special occasions, kneeled down three times regularly every day to pray to God, and nothing could keep him from doing so. The lesson of sacred biography is, that to be holy and useful we must pray much.

The worship of God, either in the great congregation or in the prayer-meeting,

should not be neglected. These are important means of grace, and their neglect ought never to be practiced by us, nor encouraged by our example. By neglect, we suffer loss, and encourage others in an evil course. It is a very bad habit to allow slight excuses to keep us from Divine worship. If we can attend to business, or meet an engagement with a friend, or visit a party of pleasure, we are well enough to honor God with our presence in the house of prayer. Beware of excuses at all times, and more especially in religious matters. Depend upon it, when we allow small matters to keep us from the house of God, our hearts are not right. There is something wrong when we can say no more for not being at church than the fashionable falsehood, "I have nothing to wear." It too clearly indicates greater respect for the opinions of men than for the approval of God—greater regard for society than for duty. I fear that many go to church more to display their rich attire than to cultivate

a meek and quiet spirit—more to be seen of men than to secure the favor of God. The truly pious love the house of God, and to them its solemn services are delightful. They sit “together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” and rejoice together “in hope of the glory of God.” They appreciate the ancient hymns, and have caught their spirit: “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” This is the Christian spirit; but, alas! how seldom do we see it!

The Lord’s supper is a most impressive and solemn service, full of sacred meaning and expression. It was instituted by our Lord just before his death, as a perpetual remembrancer and monument of that event. In full view of his

approaching sufferings, Jesus ordained this solemn feast, and gave the command to celebrate it often till he shall come again. He requires of every professed follower publicly to testify his belief in his death and sufferings by partaking of this holy supper. The whole Church is repeatedly to join thus in a public representation of the death of Jesus. No one can be excused from this duty which we all owe to the Lord Jesus. It is as plainly enjoined as is prayer or praise. To neglect it is not only to disobey Christ, but to slight his dying request. Moreover, it is a means of grace designed to strengthen us and unite us together in love. Many have been greatly aided and refreshed at these communion seasons. Jesus draws near, and they sup with him. They see him in the garden, and witness his agony. They behold him at Pilate's bar, and then hanging upon the cross. They follow him to the grave, and rejoice in his glorious resurrection. They look upon him ascending up "far above all principality

and power," and made "Head over all things to the Church." They are blessed in contemplation of these things, their hearts melt into contrition and love, and soon the joys of pardon and hope overflow their souls.

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,  
Which before the cross I spend,  
Life and health and peace possessing  
From the sinner's dying Friend.  
Here I'll sit for ever, viewing  
Mercy's streams in streams of blood:  
Precious drops, my soul bedewing,  
Plead and claim my peace with God."

What means of grace is like this? How can we, who so much need Divine grace, refuse to come to this holy supper, where we eat the food of angels? Many neglect to partake of the holy sacrament on the ground of "unworthiness." These live in sin, and whatever sin is sufficient to keep them from the table of the Lord is sufficient to keep them out of his kingdom. Let them speedily repent, before spiritual ruin overtake them. The truly penitent should go to the table of the

Lord, for they are invited to that which it represents. Mrs. Wesley professed to receive the direct witness of the Spirit while receiving the holy communion, and others have been similarly blessed. In the autobiography of the Rev. J. B. Finley, there is an account of the conversion of a penitent while receiving the sacrament from the hands of the venerable Bishop McKendree. The incident occurred at a camp-meeting in the West, and near its close. The Lord's supper was to be administered. The ministers were all invited around the table, and the venerable Bishop McKendree offered the prayer of consecration, and then distributed the elements to the ministers of Christ. "A solemn stillness reigned around, broken only by a deep sigh or a half-suppressed sob, while one after another of that large congregation came to celebrate the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. Nearly in front of the Bishop, beyond the altar, stood a weeping penitent, reclining her head upon the



shoulder of a converted sister, and sobbing as if her heart would break, while she gazed upon the scene. Her appearance and manner attracted the attention of the benevolent McKendree, and, looking toward her, he said, 'Come here, my child, and kneel at the foot of the cross, and you shall find mercy.' 'Do you think,' said she, through her tears, 'so vile a sinner as I may venture to approach the sacramental board, and take in my unholy hands the emblems of the Saviour's dying love?' 'Yes, my child; it was for just such sinners as you the blessed Jesus died, and while writhing in his last agony he demonstrated his willingness and power to save, by taking the penitent malefactor with him to heaven.' 'Then I'll go to Jesus,' said she; and hurrying to the table, she fell on her knees and cried aloud to God. With streaming eyes the Bishop administered the bread; and just as her lips tasted the wine of the sacramental cup, pardon was communicated, and heaven sprang

ap in her heart. Instantly she rose to her feet, her face shining like that of an angel, while, with an eloquence that went to every heart, she told the simple story of the cross, and the wondrous power of Christ to save." Beautiful and impressive scene! Who can stand at the table of Christ, and say to the truly penitent, "Stand off?" The Church cries out at every communion season, "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins" are welcome at this sacred feast.

There are duties which we owe to other members of the Church. Towards all we are bound by the special command of Christ to exercise brotherly love, which St. Paul requires us to "continue." Redeemed by the sufferings of the same Saviour, sprinkled with the same precious blood of atonement, regenerated by the same Divine Spirit, constrained by the same love of God, animated by the same precious hope, and journeying to the same glorious home, we must love one

another, and thereby "we know that we have passed from death unto life." The present generation of Christians is greatly deficient in this virtue. There is but little "brotherly love" seen in these days—but little of love for others simply because they are Christians, and from no other consideration. Brotherly love overleaps the limitations of society and the boundaries of fashionable life, disregards poverty and rags, and recognizes as brothers all who bear the family likeness, and love the common Saviour. The question is not, Is he rich? is he genteel? is he respectable? No; but the true Christian asks, Does he know and love the Saviour? This is all, and this is enough. If Jesus were now on earth, and kept the company he did during his earthly life, and went in the same style, thousands who now call themselves Christians would not associate with him or have him in their houses! These are idolaters, and their idol is fashionable society. They are guilty of that sin

which St. James so strongly denounces—  
“respect of persons.” They say to “him  
that weareth the gay clothing, Sit thou  
here in a good place; and they say to  
the poor, Stand thou there, or, Sit here  
under my footstool.” This is sinful, and  
should not be among Christians, whose  
chief characteristic ought to be *humility*.  
Brotherly love is careful of a Christian’s  
reputation, and carries a mantle which  
“covers a multitude of faults.” It regards  
a brother’s feelings, and supplies his  
wants; visits the “fatherless and widows  
in their affliction,” and gives encourage-  
ment to the distressed. A good example  
and mutual assistance is due by all Chris-  
tians to each other. Far more than with  
Masonic ties should members of the  
Church be united together, and stand as  
one family, loving and beloved.

“Then let us ever bear  
The blessed end in view,  
And join with mutual care  
To fight our passage through;  
And kindly help each other on,  
Till all receive the starry crown.”

Nearly allied to brotherly love, is religious zeal and anxiety for the conversion of sinners. True religion takes her disciples by the hand and leads them to the cross, and there shows them the Son of God dying for sinners; and then points them to the multitudes around perishing in their sins. She teaches the immense value of their souls, the great danger they are in, the eternity of misery to which they are going, and that a speedy repentance is the only hope that remains for them. She inspires a strong desire to do something for them—a burning anxiety to lead them to the Saviour. As he who has been cured of some dreadful disease sympathizes with those who are similarly affected, and is constantly prompted to inform them of what relieved and restored him, so the converted man feels deeply for sinners, and greatly desires to tell them of the power of Christ to save. This disposition always accompanies conversion, and proves the genuineness of the work. He who knows

nothing of it in his experience has good reason to doubt his conversion. Religion is not and cannot be selfish. It is just the opposite of selfishness, It is love—love to God and to all his creatures, for it is impossible to love God and not love his creatures—love active and powerful. Wherever this principle exists, it causes deep feeling for others; it plans, and prays, and talks, and acts for their spiritual good. Disappointments and repulses will not stop it; for it looks to God and eternity, and follows a leader who was crucified for men. It is the principle by which the world is converted to God; for Christ has made his followers the instruments for the accomplishment of this great work. He says to all who have experienced the riches of his grace: “Ye shall be *witnesses unto me* both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.” When he pardons and renews a soul, he sends that soul to tell others of his mercy and power, and the glory of

his grace. Thus Divine grace is “like leaven hid in three measures of meal till the whole is leavened.” It reaches one, and he carries the news to others with earnest and joyful feelings; they seek it, and go out to their friends with the glad tidings, and in this way the great work goes on. Various are the expedients resorted to by those who feel this Divine impulse. Some speak of their feelings in an earnest, simple, and artless manner; some give a tract, or lend a religious book; some persuade others to attend church, take them to prayer and class-meetings; some write religious letters to their acquaintances; and all pray fervently for the conversion of souls. This religious zeal is greatly needed. Lay agency should be employed in all the churches. Laymen ought to lead in prayer-meetings, and exhort the people publicly, as well as conduct the exercises of Sabbath-schools and class-meetings. They have the talents—nearly all the male members have talents sufficient for

this work—and if they had as much religion as they ought to have, and felt for sinners as their condition demands, they would do it. Great good is resulting from the labors of a few laymen in Scotland who exhort and hold meetings; and the active part taken by laymen in the union prayer-meetings at the North, during the recent great awakening, was, under God, the main cause of the universal interest manifested. Had the movement been started and conducted by clergymen, but little in all probability would have been accomplished. But when laymen took the matter in hand, and showed in a practical manner their sympathy for sinners and zeal for their conversion, the people felt that there must be something in it, and it attracted their attention. This is but the old Methodistic order. Methodism inspired her people with religious zeal, and sent out every member as a missionary at home and in his neighborhood, charged to bring sinners to



Christ. We have departed from the good old way in this respect.

The office of exhorter, which was so useful in other days, is but little known now. It is a very great mistake to suppose that since ministers are more plentiful, there is no necessity for exhorters. There is too much sameness in having the minister conduct every meeting, and people weary of sameness. Moreover, we experience something interesting and exciting when a neighbor addresses us. We feel that it is not professional, but the effect of an earnest spirit. We listen attentively, and the word is powerful. There should be exhorters in every church, and indeed nearly every male member should occasionally exhort the people. Two of the most useful men I ever knew were exhorters. They were Thomas Rudd, of Portsmouth, Virginia, and Valentine Winfree, of Chesterfield, in the same State. They were holy and eminently devoted men, and doubtless

their reward is great. Mr. Rudd would walk several miles into the country after a day of hard work to hold a prayer-meeting; and this frequently during the week. Though a man of very ordinary ability, his earnestness and great piety rendered him eminently useful. His labors were successful, and resulted in much good. For all he had a word of exhortation, and seemed never satisfied if he were not doing something for Christ. Mr. Winfree was in early life a horse-racer and gambler, and withal profane, but by the powerful preaching of the Methodist itinerants he was brought to repentance. His conversion was strongly marked, and satisfactory. He spoke of it always as very clear, and had no doubt whatever on the subject. Soon after that great change, he sought the sanctifying grace of God, and obtained a baptism of the Holy Ghost which made him a strong and courageous soldier of Christ through life. He became an exhorter at once, and was always exhorting, praying, or

praising God. Whenever he met any one, the next question after asking about his health was almost invariably, "How is your soul prospering?" His knowledge of the Scripture was so perfect that in conversation and in prayer and exhortation he used its language almost altogether. How rich were those prayers and exhortations, so simple, so earnest, so evangelical! I think he was the happiest man I ever saw: always rejoicing. Though often with him, I never saw him at any time otherwise than ready to praise God; and he did praise God day and night. He became in the last years of his life subject to affliction, but was, as ever, happy in Christ. One day he said to me, "Brother A., God must love me a great deal. It is said, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,' and he has been chastening me very much lately." A cancer appeared on his hand, which spread so, that his physician advised the amputation of his arm. "Bring your instruments," was his calm reply. When

the doctor came, he took off his coat, and threw up the sleeve of his shirt, saying, "Go to work." "But I must bind you," said the doctor. "No," said he; "God will give me grace to hold still." While the doctor was taking off his arm, he was saying quietly, "Glory to God! glory to God! glory to God!" When the operation was finished, he said, "Call in my family, and let us return thanks to God." They kneeled down there, and he poured out his heart in praise to God, until he became so happy that he shouted aloud. The society of this good man was of incalculable advantage to me, though I knew him but a short time. His life was glorious, and his death triumphant. I never saw his equal in all respects. Intellectually there was nothing at all remarkable about him, but spiritually he was a great man. The influence he exerted was extensive and powerful, for his piety was attractive and cheerful, and "none knew him but to love him, none named him but to praise."

What the world wants is a religion that has *a heart*, and is full of great and world-wide sympathies. When the members of the Church can prove that they have such a religion and are actuated by it—when they are full of kindly feeling and tender regard for the unconverted—when they can pray and weep over them, and go to them with public and private exhortation and entreaty—then will men acknowledge the truth of Christianity, and in multitudes turn to God. Love is the great means of spiritual conquest. God seeks to conquer the world by love: and if we would be instruments of usefulness to men, we must love them. When “the love of Christ constrains” the whole Church, we shall see great changes among men:

“*Then shall the voice of singing  
Flow joyfully along;  
And hill and valley, ringing  
With one triumphant song,  
Proclaim the contest ended,  
And Him, who once was slain,  
Again to earth descended,  
In righteousness to reign.*”

## CHAPTER VIII.

## DUTIES OF MEMBERS—CONTINUED.

THE duties we have referred to are such as appertain chiefly to our character as Christians. There are others growing out of our relation to the Church with which we are connected. These are not the less important because they are relative. If the Church is a Divine institution, the duties which it requires are eminently worthy of our highest consideration and our prompt attention. Many seem to regard the Church as a means of grace for their special benefit, and no more; forgetting that it is a means of grace only while its members faithfully discharge their duties. It is a means of grace because it is aggressive, and actively engaged in the work of the Lord. A

great work is before the Church. The world is to be converted by its instrumentality, and it is required to become the permanent conservative influence among men. Among the first lessons taught by our Saviour was this: "Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world." Almost the last charge he gave his disciples was to the same amount: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth." The glorious gospel of the grace of God is committed to the Church as a sacred deposit for the whole world—a holy trust to be communicated to every creature. We are placed beside the healing and life-imparting fountain of salvation, and commanded to invite all to come and partake with us freely. The membership of the Church is a royal priesthood for the whole race—an army of conquest to subdue all nations to Christ—a company of light-bearers holding forth the word of life to the benighted

mariners on the sea of time. In its very nature and design, and by its constitution, it is essentially missionary and aggressive. When it loses this character by the delinquency of its members, it loses its vitality, and begins a downward course. With the banner of the cross waving in the breeze, it must press forward to new victories and greater conquests, or be driven from its high position. To the idle the angel of the Lord addresses a curse; ay, and a "bitter curse" to those who "come not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." The prophet of God is sent with heavy tidings to all who live at ease in the Church: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!" Great is our responsibility! Men of the world look to us for the words of hope; and we must give them, or they perish. Alas! they are perishing. From fair and beautiful lands, from mild and genial climes, from scenes of grandeur and loveliness, they go by millions, and hundreds of millions,



to the grave without God and without hope. All around us they are perishing. Immortal souls are sinking into endless ruin. "The fields are white unto the harvest." Let this be felt deeply by every member of the Church, and the missionary spirit be sought and cultivated. This is our duty. The missionary spirit must thoroughly pervade the whole Church. There should be no exception. There can be no excuse. Every man, woman, and child should feel it, and be moved by it to most fervent prayers for the conversion of the world, to most diligent labor in the sacred cause, and to warm-hearted liberality in giving to the support of ministers and missionaries. If we have not that spirit, we should meditate upon the subject, and pray for it, until we feel as Jesus did when he gave up all his glory to become the poorest of missionaries. Talk we of giving? Say no more about it, since Jesus gave up his crown and throne and the worship of angels to become the

greatest of sufferers in this very cause! Talk we of giving? Behold the ancient apostles, the noble army of martyrs, the vast company of heroic missionaries, who devoted life, property, and all to this high and holy work! See them leaving the hallowed scenes of home, bidding adieu to the dearest friends that the heart can know, resigning the dreams of ambition and the visions of hope, and going to live and labor and die among strangers and savages! Away with selfishness now! The people perish; send them the bread of life. The men are standing among us, saying, "Here we are: send us." Can we withhold the means? Too long has this work been neglected. Give then liberally to support your own ministers, and to send the gospel to the heathen. To preach faithfully, and to exert the proper influence, requires all of a minister's time; and he should be wholly separate from worldly pursuits and embarrassments. Many a faithful minister has been driven from the regular

work of his office, because the people would not support him. "How can they preach except they be sent," and properly supported? There is a lamentable defect in the piety of the Church just here. The pastors at home are poorly supported, and where there should be hundreds of missionaries, there are not scores. The Jews gave about one-fourth of their incomes, and prospered more than any other people while doing so; but how little do we give! The promises of God are very full and plain to the effect that He will abundantly bless the liberal, but we are slow to believe them. We live in the enjoyment of plenty, and surrounded by the comforts of home, but the ministers of Christ have the most meagre support, too often no parsonage; and then the heathen are without the words of life! It is unquestionably true that religion produces benevolence. This principle is universally recognized. The pagans felt the force of it, and contributed to build temples and support their priests.

The ladies of Ephesus gave their jewelry to assist in rebuilding the temple of Diana. The Mohammedan is bound to bestow one-tenth of his revenue on charitable objects, and "if his conscience accuses him of fraud or extortion, the tenth, under the idea of restitution, is enlarged to a fifth." The Israelites had very strict laws on this subject, and, as we have already stated, it is reckoned that they gave away about one-fourth of their income. Besides this there were frequent free-will offerings made by them for special purposes. The thirty-fifth chapter of Exodus and the seventh chapter of Numbers contain accounts of the offerings which they made in the wilderness for the service of the tabernacle; and considering that they were escaped bond-slaves, and were for years in the wilderness, where their goods must have been few indeed, those offerings were very great. The twenty-ninth chapter of the First Book of Chronicles gives us an account of the offerings of the Israelites for the building of Solo-

mon's temple, when "about thirty millions of gold and silver" were "offered willingly," and "the people rejoiced." Ezra and Nehemiah inform us of the liberality of the Jews when just returned from captivity. They gave vast sums for the rebuilding of the temple of God. That temple always had a treasury, into which the people cast their offerings, as they came to worship. Jesus "sat over against" it, and watched them as the rich gave large sums, but when a poor widow cast in all the money she had, he could not withhold his commendation. She did well to give, and in giving all she did nobly. The early Christians gave liberally, and sometimes sold their possessions and laid the money at the apostles' feet. Gibbon says of them: "The pagans, who were actuated by feelings of humanity, while they derided the doctrines, acknowledged the benevolence of the new sect." Chrysostom says that the church of Antioch supported "three thousand poor members out of the public oblations."

The history of Christianity bears ample testimony to the truth that true religion produces liberality. Missionary Churches almost invariably contribute to send missionaries to others, and the liberality of converted slaves among us is well known. The true religion must be known in this way, because it is from God, and "God is love." It is obedience to Him who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Christians are able to give because the cardinal virtue of their religion is self-denial; and extravagance is denounced, but prudence, industry, and economy are encouraged. Let the Church, therefore, be careful to cultivate a benevolent, liberal spirit. The support of the ministry, the erection of good churches and parsonages, the establishment of schools and colleges, and the missionary work, demand large hearts. The best and most experienced men of our ministry have too often been driven out of the itinerancy, because the Church provided no houses for their families, and

but a most scanty support. Preachers are men, and have the wants and feelings of men. They must feel deeply when their families are forced to go from house to house, and year after year have no home, while the members of the Church are living in comfort, and often in abundance. Their children are growing up, but they cannot exercise the proper discipline nor train them aright while going from house to house and living in the families of others. How long shall Jesus in the person of his ministers complain: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head?" How long shall Methodists keep behind other denominations in this matter? How long shall we drive our ministers out of the regular work as soon as they secure that experience and ability which qualify them for the greatest usefulness? Let us look to this matter, for our ministers cannot preach with freedom and cheerfulness of spirit when their minds are oppressed by

care and anxiety with regard to their homeless families. Weighed down by the pressure of want, their minds are like the caged eagle—they cannot rise and soar. In every circuit and station the people should provide a good, comfortable, respectable parsonage, and see that it is properly furnished.

In every neighborhood there should be a neat church, and near it a school-house. This will unite the people, and keep the neighborhood from being divided and broken up. It will promote moral and intellectual improvement, and join religion and education together. It will secure a congregation whenever there is preaching during the week, and will enable the Church to keep up an interesting Sabbath-school. These are not unimportant advantages. They are worthy of grave consideration. There is too little permanence in our work, and our people have but little local attachment, and few local associations that have any influence upon them.



But in the matter of churches we are deficient. In most of the cities we need more and better houses of worship. Churches should colonize by sending off detachments to other parts of the city to form Sunday-schools and build new churches. These ought to be aided by the parent churches until they are able to sustain themselves, and then in turn they should send out colonies. To have a large membership in one church is very impolitic. The pastor cannot visit all as he ought, and often the poor, who most need pastoral care, suffer for the want of it. There are in all such societies many who might become very useful if they were where their services are needed; but now they have their talents carefully folded up in a napkin and laid away. A number of wealthy men support the church, while there are many who could give much, and would do so if they felt that it was necessary, who scarcely give any thing at all. This is not for the best. There are portions of the city to which

companies from these large societies should go, and where they might do great good in building up churches. All the means and talents of the Church should be employed, for there is work for all.

In many places the people need better houses of worship. The tabernacle was allowable while the Israelites were in the wilderness and were poor; but when they had subdued their enemies, and were living in good style themselves, God moved them to build him a magnificent temple. While the Christians were persecuted for their religion, they worshipped in "upper rooms" and in caves; but when persecution ceased, they built churches; and as they increased in prosperity, they built better temples for the worship of God. *The house we worship in is the outward expression of our gratitude, and should correspond in style with our prosperity.* This is the principle recognized by God's people in all ages, and it is a grievous sin to live in comfortable and fine houses, while the

ark of God stands in some log-cabin or some barn-like building, with neither enclosure nor doors. It is to prefer our own comfort to the glory of God; it is more—it is to dishonor him publicly. It shows forth to our children and the world the estimate we place upon religion, and teaches them that we think it a matter of minor importance. If no higher consideration moved us, self-respect and pride of neighborhood should induce us to build suitable houses of worship. A good church is a public improvement, and enhances the value of every man's property in its vicinity. We naturally judge of the refinement and morality of a community by the appearance of their houses of worship; and a stranger would dislike very much to settle in a neighborhood where there is no church, or only some old dilapidated wreck of one.

It becomes the Church to provide for her sons and daughters proper educational facilities. Religion is the foster-mother of education. They cannot safely

be separated. "Knowledge is power," and Christianity must lay hold on that power, sanctify it, and employ it for blessing the world. Education is incomplete if religion is not added to it; and when unrestrained by Divine grace, is likely to result in great evil to society. It is capable alike of vast usefulness and great evil; it is either a tremendous curse or a glorious blessing. It leads either to a millennium or a repetition of the horrors of the French Revolution. It wields a sceptre of dominion that elevates and refines or destroys. It is the mission of Christianity to control and direct this great power, and render it subservient only to good. The educated control the government, the press, the arts and sciences, the industrial pursuits, and regulate public opinion. Christianity should by all means seek to prepare the rising generation for this responsible position, and secure their influence for the best interests of humanity. In no other way can we control public sentiment, and

thoroughly Christianize and sanctify all departments of life. Religion is the life-blood of the world, and by means of seats of learning it may be sent into all the various parts of society. The Church, therefore, must preside over this department, and provide colleges and universities to which we can safely direct the young. Let Christian liberality endow them, and secure their successful operation. This is a great work, a glorious work, and we have been too negligent in regard to it. Here wealth may erect a monument more durable than brass, and enter upon a work of usefulness that shall bless the world for ages to come. The wealth that covetousness collects and pride hoards up, might here become a fountain of ever-increasing benefit to the race, and secure for its donor the richest pleasure, and a name among the benefactors of humanity.

The complaint is frequently heard that ministers are so scarce, and the number not sufficient to meet the demand. Surely,

the Divine Spirit calls a sufficient number to this holy work. Where are they? They are in many instances poor young men, whose natural diffidence and want of education deter them from entering the ministry. They are conscious of a want of preparation, and struggle for years against their convictions of duty. It is a painful struggle. They feel that they ought to preach, but they know that they are not qualified, and poverty prevents their entering upon a course of study at some school. A few of them at last find their way into the itinerancy, many become local preachers, and some decline in spirituality, and perhaps live in worldliness all their days. Some provision might be made by which these men could be saved to the itinerancy, and made useful ministers of Christ. A little encouragement, and a few years at school, would send into the ministry many an excellent man, who is now trembling and halting between two opinions. Societies might be formed in the

Conferences to attend to this matter. It is reasonable.

The great demand is for educated ministers; but if I apprehend aright the desire of the people, it is not for stiff theologians, made in theological schools, but for *educated preachers*, who know something of human wants, and can preach to the great heart of humanity with intelligence and feeling. The history of the Methodist and Baptist Churches demonstrates an important principle. These Churches have never required any previous theological education of candidates for the ministry, but have received those who gave evidence of personal piety and a call to preach, and of ability to "speak readily, justly, clearly." They have succeeded beyond any other denominations, and now surpass them all in numbers, while in every thing else they certainly equal them. The other Churches require of their ministers a preparatory theological training. This is conclusive as to the advantages of the two plans for efficiency.

Theological schools cannot make preachers. A recent letter from England contains important information in regard to this matter, and worthy of consideration. It states that dissatisfaction is growing up there with regard to the system of making preachers in theological colleges. The same state of things exists here to a certain extent. But to the letter:

“There is a good deal of discussion among the British churches at the present time regarding preaching, preachers, and colleges. That the approved traditional methods of theological education are disappointing expectation in the men they turn out for the pulpit, has become contemporaneously the complaint of various sections of the Church. It is whispered in the charges of Bishops. It has been the burden of not a few introductions in Independent colleges. In less measured phrase, it is murmured from the pews, as the products of the colleges emerge on the congregations. The question is everywhere being started



whether something be not wanting in the training of the student to fulfil the purposes of his learning, even that he commend himself and his teaching to the unlearned and the ignorant, and make 'a hurrying world fain to turn aside and listen.' "

Much of this dissatisfaction arises doubtless from the fact that men are often trained for the ministry in their schools without regard to personal piety and a Divine call to preach. But still the system is unsatisfactory in its results. What shall we do then? By all means, give our uneducated young men a good education in the ordinary branches of an English and even of a classical course, and then send them at once to their work. Prepare them to think for themselves and to teach the people: then they can study theology in connection with their labors, and where they will be more likely to reach conclusions of a practical, healthy, and evangelical character. Theology is not merely a science,

nor is it a dead language; but it is full of life and power, and cannot be properly understood but in connection with life, and its own experimental operations upon the human heart and character. The true order is not the theologian first, and then the preacher; but the preacher first, and then the theologian. This is the scriptural plan, and we do well to adhere to it. But the common sense of every man will say, Do not send men to preach to the people who are ignorant of the first principles of the English language, and cannot speak "readily, justly, or clearly." Place the young men who feel called of God to this work in good schools for a few years, and their profiting will appear unto all.

There is another subject which demands serious attention. I allude to the difficulty of finding suitable men who are willing to fill the offices of class-leaders and stewards. We have in most places the men, if they would consent to serve the Church in these positions. That

they are unwilling seems to argue against the depth of their piety, and their devotion to the interests of the Church of God. The Church must have these officers, and upon the faithful discharge of their duties depends to a very considerable extent its prosperity. Some must fill these places, or the Church will inevitably suffer. It is as necessary to have these offices as to have ministers, but there is this difference: men are called of God to the ministry, but the Head of the Church leaves these offices to the willingness of members to enter them and there labor for Him. The Spirit called upon the Church to “separate Paul and Barnabas to the work whereunto” He had “called them;” but when deacons for the service of the Church in temporal matters were to be appointed, they were elected without any Divine call to the work. Can it be that the piety of our people is not sufficient to supply these offices—that they are unwilling to labor for Christ—that, while the Church has

done so much for them, they will not labor for its success? Is there not gratitude enough to the Lord of life and glory, who suffered and died for us, to prompt us to do some part of the great work of the Church? Are we under no obligations to the Church of Christ for the gospel, for the ministry, for the Sabbath, for the prayers of saints, and those faithful efforts that were blessed to our conversion, and since that period have promoted our edification? Has the Church no claim upon us as members of society, which it tends to elevate and reform? But there is a different view of this matter. These offices are positions of great honor—honor that comes from God and from the people of God. The honors of this world are counted worthy of the ambition and labors of men; how much more that honor which is immortal and Divine! Earthly distinctions are like the transient glare of the meteor, or like the name written on the sandy beach which the next wave washes out; but those who

occupy positions in the Church of God make to themselves names as imperishable as the cause they promote. Yes, it is an honor to fill an office in the Christian Church. David said, "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Even in a worldly sense, the distinction conferred is not to be despised. It is the endorsement of the purest body of men in the world—their public endorsement of our character and trustworthiness. Such endorsement is of great value at home, but especially where we are personally unknown. I would infinitely prefer to travel or go to a strange place to do business as an official member of the Methodist Church, than to carry with me any number of letters of introduction and recommendation, or secret signs. Many refuse to serve on the ground that they do not think themselves qualified, or that others can do much better than they. This is not a matter for them to decide. The question with them should

be, Does the Church want me for this position? do others think me qualified? If men refused to enter the ministry on the plea which they make, there would be few indeed in that sacred office. True piety is willing to do any thing for Christ, and its question is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The Church greatly needs good leaders and stewards. The best men should fill these offices and the most intelligent. Let men of character, of standing and influence, take these posts of honor and usefulness, and great good will be the result.

The class-leader should seek to be a deeply pious man—a man of faith, humility, earnestness, and affectionate spirit, walking with God, and praying fervently for sanctifying grace. He should carefully study the Holy Scriptures for his own improvement in the knowledge of God, and in order to be able to speak properly and profitably to the members of his class. The Bible is the book for the leader; and his best preparation for

the duties of the class-room, next to personal piety, is familiarity with its treasures. Let him "know the Scriptures," and treasure up in his heart and mind their Divine utterances, and feel the inspiration of their glorious truths, and he will and must succeed. The Bible is the great book of preparation, of thought, motive, eloquence, and power to the preacher, exhorter, and leader. If I were asked, What is the best means of becoming a great preacher? I should answer, *Study the Bible carefully and prayerfully.* And the same answer applies equally, if not more appropriately, to the leadership. The word of God contains the best views of religious experience and duty, the wisest counsels, the strongest encouragements, and motives of infinite weight. It is a treasure-house, stored with arms of tried value. The leader, to be successful, must learn to love the members of his class with the strongest Christian affection, such as will lead to sympathy for them in all their trials and sorrows,

and induce him to visit them as often as their condition may need or his engagements permit. He must pray for them regularly, as a parent would for his children. In the class-room, he should be brief in his prayers and his exhortations, taking care not to be tedious, and, at the same time, not hasty. Long prayers and long addresses are out of place anywhere, but especially so in a class-meeting. A stanza of some suitable hymn is very appropriate when sung at intervals during the exercises, but singing by one part of the class while the leader is engaged with the rest should never be allowed.

Stewards are important officers, and good stewards are greatly needed. Inefficient stewards will soon ruin any circuit or station. The qualifications of a good steward are *liberality*, *industry*, and *method*. If a man does not give as he ought, he is sure to fail in persuading others to do so. When we send out a man to collect for us who, worth ten thousand dollars, gives but five or ten or



perhaps fifteen, we cannot expect him to do much. His example is a bad one, and its influence is only evil, and that continually. The people will give as he does, or perhaps less. Let every steward inform himself as to what constitutes liberality—as to what proportion of our income we should give to the Church of Christ—and then act accordingly himself. Let him head the list with such a sum as will lead others to feel that he is doing his duty well. When he has done this, let him go to work with others: not wait for a convenient opportunity, which is the sure way to fail altogether. Idle and negligent stewards cause the ministry to suffer. Want enters the parsonage, while they are putting off the performance of their duty to another time, and, surrounded by abundance themselves, little dream of the state of things in the home of the preacher. Time rapidly passes away, and the preacher's wants come on like an armed man. The end of the year approaches, when missionary and

Conference collections are taken up in the congregation, and then the steward makes a spasmodic effort, collects a small amount, and the preacher leaves for Conference unpaid. Allowed but a poor support at most, through the negligence of the stewards he fails to get that. This is hard. I have known stewards refuse to provide a home for their preacher's family, or to give him a regular boarding place, fail to pay but little over half his quarterage, and then make a great ado the next year because they could not get such a preacher as they desired! We need stewards who are willing to act—to work a little for Christ. What will be said by Jesus at the last judgment? “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.” Stewards of the Church! ye labor not for your pastors only, but also for Christ and for the Church. What is done for ministers is done for their Master; and he will so acknowledge it at the last day, and say, “Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the

least of these, *ye did it to me.*" Let not the year pass away, therefore, in inactivity, but begin early, and methodically. Let each steward have a book with a column for names, and a column for each quarter, and one for the whole amount, on each page, and well ruled for this purpose, thus :

NAMES.	First Quarter.	Second Quarter.	Third Quarter.	Fourth Quarter.	Whole Amount.
J. Smith.	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$100.00
W. Peters.	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	40.00
G. Jones.	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	200.00

This will illustrate the mode of procedure. Let him take this book to every member of the church and congregation, and ascertain what each one is willing to give during the year, which is to be placed in the last column ; then let him call upon these persons quarterly to receive their quarterly dues, and place opposite their names in the columns for that purpose the sums as they are paid, and show them the entry for their satisfaction, and to increase their confidence

that all is right. The class-leaders might render very great assistance in this work, by collecting in the classes, and entering the amounts in their class-books, from which they can be transcribed quarterly into the stewards' book. This is a simple and admirable plan, and cannot fail to work well when it is carried out with care and industry.

Dearly beloved brethren, let us all work in our appropriate spheres, and stand at our posts, "growing up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE GENERAL RULES.

THE Bible is recognized by the Methodist Church as the “only and sufficient rule of faith and practice,” and the rules given in our Discipline are simply those which “we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word.” These rules are drawn from the Bible, and are binding upon all Methodists, and, indeed, upon all men. They should be frequently read, and well studied, and by them we should do well to examine ourselves at least once a week carefully. Following these rules strictly will lead us into the higher walks of religious life, and give us an influence of a salutary character over those around us. They form an admirable compendium of Christian duty;

and happy is he who keeps them faithfully! If, as members of the Church, we obey them from the heart, we shall gain the confidence of men, and prove the excellence of our religion. This will give the Church great power.

These rules say, "It is expected of all who continue" in the Church, "that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First, By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced: such as,

The taking of the name of God in vain.

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein, or by buying or selling.

Drunkenness; or drinking spirituous liquors, unless in cases of necessity.

Fighting, quarrelling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.

The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.

The giving or taking things on usury, i. e., unlawful interest.

Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation: particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers.

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God: as,

The putting on of gold and costly apparel:

The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus:

The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God:

Softness or needless self-indulgence:

Laying up treasure upon earth:

Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in

these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly, By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men :

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison :

To their souls, by instructing, reproofing, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with ; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine, that “we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it.”

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be ; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business ; and so much the more because the world will love its own, and them only.



By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord's sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly, By attending upon all the ordinances of God: such are,

The public worship of God:

The ministry of the word, either read or expounded:

The Supper of the Lord:

Family and private prayer:

Searching the Scriptures, and

Fasting or abstinence.

These are the general rules of our societies; all which we are taught of God

to observe, even in his written word, which is the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over that soul, as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But if then he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.”

In these rules there are some things to which particular attention should be called. This language deserves serious attention: “*Drunkenness; or drinking spirituous liquors, unless in cases of necessity.*” This is forbidden, and wisely so. This has been the law of the Methodist Church from the beginning. Its testimony has always been against not only intemperance, but also against moderate drinking. The Scripture rule is “*a little wine*” when

*necessary*, and not as a common drink. There is a propriety and wisdom in this rule which is now the more apparent. Intemperance in every sense is one of the greatest evils that have ever cursed our world. It has destroyed more valuable lives than war, pestilence, and famine, caused more wretchedness than we can form any just conception of, and ruined more for time and for eternity than any thing else. It has spared neither the high nor the humble, the rich nor the poor, the wise nor the ignorant, the free nor the bond, the young nor the old, the innocence of childhood nor the beauty of woman. Wherever it has gone, it has carried desolation, and spread "lamentation, and mourning, and woe." The manly youth, with generous heart, noble impulses, and lofty intellect, the pride of his parents and the idol of a young wife, has fallen a victim to the demon of the wine-cup—a father's hopes blighted, a mother's heart crushed, a wife's cup filled to overflowing with bitterness! Thou-

sands of such cases occur annually. It is enough to madden society, to rouse every feeling to virtuous indignation, and stir the heart to deeds of valor against the monster vice. Time and again, the land has rung with thrilling appeals, and temperance organizations have started into being, almost as if by magic. These have labored well and successfully for a time; but, alas! they have disbanded with few exceptions, and left the foe master of the field. It remains now for the Church of God to go forward, as she ought ever to have done, and engage in strength Divine with the great enemy of our race and our peace. Every thing now calls the Church, and the cry of suffering humanity must be heeded. The ministry and membership should unite in carrying out the disciplinary regulation, and, by example, and every possible means, seek to reform men, and correct public sentiment on the subject.

On page 123, the Discipline says, "Shall we insist on the rule concerning

dress? By all means. This is no time to give encouragement to superfluity of apparel. Therefore let each preacher in charge direct the attention of those committed to his care to the general rule on this subject, and to the Holy Scriptures on which it is based; mildly yet earnestly urging them to keep the same."

You perceive from this that the Church regards this matter of such importance as to justify a special notice. By many it is considered as a very small matter, and not deserving the attention of the Church. Paul and Peter, however, both thought it proper to guard the Church against extravagance in dress. If it was necessary in their day, when, for the most part, the members of the Church were from the humbler classes of society, and subjected to constant persecution, and therefore not much exposed to temptations of this character, how great must be its necessity in these days! Extravagance is wicked, and working mischief in every direction. The heart

and mind and time are all taken up with the grave matter of dress; conversation is turned in this direction; money is wasted upon unnecessary articles; pride is imperceptibly fostered; benevolence is checked, for want of means; debts are contracted which may or may not be paid; young men are deterred from marriage, because they are not able to support a wife according to the present custom of extravagance; and many other evils grow out of the system. It is foolish and wicked. Any simpleton can dress in all the pomp of fashion; and the vilest heart may be concealed by the most gaudy colors and the richest apparel. The lowest-born may vie with those of long-honored ancestry, and the degraded and bankrupt in character and morals may dress with greater profusion of ornaments and beauty of style than the most refined and virtuous. Why, then, should such a passion for dress be so prevalent? Let the Church show the world "a more excellent way."

On page 101 of the Discipline we find this question and answer: "How shall we guard against bribery, dancing, attending circuses and theatres, Sabbath-breaking, and the other evils forbidden in the General Rules? Let the people be admonished that none who practice any of these evils can remain in our Church. In denouncing bribery, strongly advise our people to discountenance all treats given by candidates before or at elections, and not to be partakers in any respect of such iniquitous practices."

In regard to dancing, especially, it is proper to give a few suggestions. Its increasing prevalence, and its aggressive position towards the Church, require it.

The question often arises, "What harm is there in dancing?" It is a legitimate question, and deserves an answer. We are not disposed to act without reason, or to pronounce upon the morality of conduct without just cause. Christianity is not a religion of ignorance and dogmatism, or a system of positive precepts

that have no foundation in reason and propriety. Above all other religions it recognizes, stimulates, and ennobles human reason, and more than once has thrown open its prison, broken off its chains, and given it freedom.

But to the question. It is often urged that dancing is not sinful, because it is recognized in Scripture. Solomon says: "There is a time to dance." Very well; but when is that time? David answered this, by both precept and example. He says: "Praise God in the dance;" and when the ark of God was brought back, he did "praise God" by dancing before it "with all his might." We have no right to claim scriptural authority for any thing that is not done according to the Scriptures. But modern dancing is not practiced according to the directions of the Scriptures; therefore modern dancing cannot claim the sanction of the Scriptures.

It is frequently asserted that dancing is conducive to health, and as such is a



beneficial exercise of salutary influence upon the physical and mental constitution. If this be true, there is some force in the argument. But is it true? I am ready to admit that dancing *might be practiced* so as to render it conducive to health; but I am far from admitting that it is, or is likely ever to be, until the influence of Christianity becomes more prevalent and of greater general power than at present. Imprudent dressing, late hours, too violent and protracted exercise, and the change from the heated atmosphere of the crowded room to the damp night air, in a condition unfit for resisting its injurious influence—these things necessarily render dancing exceedingly injurious to health. Dancing has thus been the occasion of many a cold, sore-throat, and consumption. Its victims have not been few; and there are multitudes who have gone to untimely graves, over which might be written, “Suicide by dancing.”

“But the Bible does not condemn it.”  
The Bible is not a string of commands

and prohibitions that refer expressly to every supposable act of life. It is on an altogether different plan. It contains certain rules of conduct—certain principles by which to regulate our lives—of universal application. It is by these that we must determine what is right and what is wrong; and not by express commands and prohibitions, which, being so great in number to suit our necessities, would so burden our memories as to render morality an impracticable matter. The Bible furnishes us with a few simple rules which are easily remembered, and capable of application to every action of life. It is by these principles that dancing is condemned. We find nothing expressly condemnatory of gambling, of horse-racing, of bull-fighting, and of many other things which are universally condemned by true Christians, because the principles of religion are evidently against them. If we examine dancing in the same way, we shall find the whole array of Scripture principles against it. No man or woman

would be led to conclude from reading the Bible that dancing is innocent. Accordingly, we find that the Church, whenever free from corruptions, has uniformly believed it sinful. In the early ages it was strictly forbidden, and so has it continued to be ever since, save when occasionally a laxity of discipline winked at its practice. The best and purest of all ages of Christianity have given but one testimony upon this subject, and they are unanimous in their condemnation of it. A dancing minister would not be tolerated, and no one feels disposed to die in a ball-room, nor does any one feel in a proper frame for prayer, or the holy communion, immediately after a dance. Why is this? Because the mind is conscious that dancing is incompatible with religion—is against the principles of the Bible. This conviction is deep, and hence it is that neither “the Church nor the world has confidence in the religion of dancing Christians. Even those who are foremost in advocating dancing

will admit, if asked seriously, that they have but little if any confidence in the professions of those claiming to be Christians who participate in such amusements. In the dying-hour they do not send for dancing members of the Church to plead with God for their souls; but more frequently the very man who has opposed most vehemently the practice of dancing. They want, in this honest hour, the man whose whole life has shown that he was a disciple of Jesus. In conversation with a young man not long since, he remarked, 'I do not see why you Christians are so much opposed to dancing: I see no particular harm in it. I do not see why a Christian may not dance without committing sin.' 'Answer one question, friend,' I responded, 'only one. Do you have as much confidence in the professions of those professors of religion who dance, as of those who do not?' He paused for a moment, and answered, 'No, sir, I do not!' This was enough; he had settled the question himself. *The*

*world has no confidence in dancing members of the Church."*

The Bible aims to produce a holy and pure character, marked by spirituality and devotion to God. The world—whatever is distinctly and peculiarly worldly—opposes by its influence and tendency the formation and progress of such a character. Hence Christians are to discriminate between what is worldly and what is not. "Love not the world." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "The friendship of the world is enmity to God." In accordance with this aim and design of the Bible, the Church requires of her members to renounce "the world." This is one of the vows which all Christians take. Now it is unquestionably true that dancing leads to worldly-mindedness, and is worldly in its character, in its associations, in its aims, and in its influence. It is a worldly amusement. "All Christians know how difficult it is, with their best endeavors, to keep their minds from becoming too

much engrossed with the world. The spirit and fashions of the world are destructive to the growth of the soul in grace, and cannot be indulged in without great spiritual loss. For days before, and as many after, their minds are so taken up with preparation for the excitement, or in dwelling upon it when passed, as to unfit them for all devotional exercises. No thoughts of God, of heaven, of judgment, are suffered to obtrude themselves at such times. No prayers are sent to God from the ball-room. It is as fatal to godliness as is the breath of the Upas to animal life. We have known one ball to be as fatal to the religion of a whole community as the sirocco to a caravan in the desert. Christians should avoid it as they would the den of the adder."

The Bible requires that when an act is of a *doubtful* character, we must give the doubt the force of certainty, so as to secure safety. Hence, St. Paul says: "He that doubteth is damned if he eat;" that is, he that doubts the propriety of eating

things sacrificed to idols, and yet eats them, is condemned. So, whoever doubts the propriety of any course of conduct, and yet pursues it, is condemned. The application of this principle to dancing is easy.

Dancing necessarily dissipates the mind, and drives out seriousness and solemnity of thought and feeling. This is its design. It is because of this tendency that it is resorted to and cherished. It is the world's device to banish care and serious reflections. Can any one for a moment doubt the effect which a dance or two would have upon the mind of an anxious inquirer? In this way it exerts a secret influence most destructive to piety, and the more fatal because secret. It is the silent miner digging beneath the wall and preparing for its fall. It accomplishes this, again, in a different way. It unfits for exertion, and destroys the disposition to activity. Some one has remarked :

“Indolence is one of the never-failing

results of excessive indulgence at such parties. The overtaxed system, when once suffered to relax, is so perfectly prostrated as to unfit the man or woman for any kind of business. The mind sympathizes with the body, and, for a time, study, devotion, or manual labor is out of the question. The whole man is unnerved, mental, moral, and physical. The great evil of such excessive exercise must be evident to every thoughtful mind."

But I go still farther. Dancing leads to licentiousness. I do not affirm that this is the invariable result, but simply that it has this tendency. Harper's Weekly once made this charge, and brought an array of facts to prove it. I have heard young men, who knew whereof they affirmed, testify to this fact, and declare that such was its influence. Take France and Italy as proof of its truth. In those countries dancing is very generally practiced, and they are proverbial for the licentiousness of the inhabit-



ants. More than this, you may search in any society where one has long been practiced, and, if you can ascertain the truth, you will find the other there also. There has been an alarming increase of licentiousness in this country for the past few years, and it has been among the higher classes, where dancing is considered a fashionable amusement. Moreover, it is at the dancing-party, and under the excitement of the occasion, and by the temptation presented and urged by the blandishments and beauty of woman, that many a young man is initiated into the horrid mysteries of the fatal wine-cup. Many a man has received the first impulse in the downward road from woman.

But I forbear. Enough has been written to show that “no rule of the Church” *simply* constitutes it right or wrong to dance, but the immutable principles of reason and revelation, binding alike upon saint and sinner, those out as well as those in the Church. No Christian should countenance dancing. Those who are en-

gaged in it are not blameless. The Christian who dances, not only breaks the most solemn vows of Church-membership—vows of equal solemnity to an oath—but, by example as well as personal act, is guilty of violating the principles of Scripture and reason. It is just such professing Christians that are crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame, and are bringing weakness, decay, and death upon the Church of God. They wish to join worldliness and Christianity, self-indulgence and religion; but Christ has forbidden the banns, and declared it impossible.

The other orthodox Churches condemn dancing, but very few are consistent enough to expel members for what they consider sinful. The Protestant Episcopal Church gives strong testimony against it. Bishop M'Ilvaine, in his pastoral letter, thus writes:

“Let me now turn to two objects in which there is no difficulty of discrimination—the theatre and the dance. The

only line I would draw in regard to these is that of entire exclusion. And yet, my brethren, I am well aware how easy it is for the imagination to array both of these in such an abstract and elementary simplicity, so divested of all that gives them their universal character and relish, that no harm could be detected in either. And the same precisely can be easily done with the card-table and the horse-race. The exercise of graceful movement in the dance, and the exercise of speed in the horse-race, may easily be conceived of in such a light as to make them very innocent. But what if they were attempted to be got up under such an abstract form, and made common amusement in such elementary simplicity—how would they succeed? Their deadness as to all that makes their usual interest would be their sufficient condemnation. The question is not what we can imagine they may be; but what they always have been, and will be, and must be, in such a world as this, to render them pleasurable

to those who patronize them. Strip them bare, till they stand in the simple innocence to which their defenders' arguments would reduce them, and the world would not have them. To be genial to the taste of those who most sustain them, they must be matters of worldly fashion and gayety; and not only so, but designed to promote the spirit of such things, and so dependent on them, that in proportion as these condiments are lacking they are rejected as insipid. Were the trial made of a series of dancing assemblies, conducted in all respects as becomes the sobriety and spiritual-mindedness of the Christian character, so that it would be nothing inconsistent if every attendant were a devout and earnestly pious person, it would need no prophet to predict their entire failure. The world would ridicule such a dance; and Christian people would think that they had something else to do than to attend to it."

The venerable Bishop Meade, a model

*episcopos*, fully endorses the views of his honored colleague of Ohio. See his Baptismal Vows and Worldly Amusements :

“As an amusement, seeing that it is a perversion of an ancient religious exercise, and has ever been discouraged by the sober-minded and pious of all nations, on account of its evil tendencies and accompaniments, we ought conscientiously to inquire whether its great liability to abuse, and its many acknowledged abuses, should not make us frown upon it in all its forms. I will briefly allude to some of the objections to it : when taught to the young at an early age, it is attended with expense of time and money which might be far better employed ; it promotes the love of dress and pleasure, to which the young are already too prone ; it tempts to vanity and love of display ; it induces a strong desire to enter on the amusements of the world at an early period, in order to exhibit the accomplishments thus acquired, and to enjoy a pleasure for which a taste has been formed ; it leads the young ones

into an exactly opposite direction to that pointed out by the word of God, and pledged in the baptismal vows. Thus educated, they are, in this respect at least, trained not in the way they ought to go, but in the way they ought to forsake, according to almost universal consent, if by Divine grace they are ever turned to God in true penitence and faith."

Let the young Christian beware of such things. Be a decided, firm, and earnest follower of Christ—holy in word and deed.

## CHAPTER X.

## CONCLUSION.

THUS far I have written of Methodism. I have written honestly and candidly and freely. The Church of my early choice has a large place in my affections—is deeply fixed in my warmest feelings. I love every part of Methodism. Her providential origin, her doctrines, her constitution and government, and her glorious history, so inspire me that I must gratefully exclaim, Thanks be unto God for such a gift! I must acknowledge that I have strong denominational feelings, and highly esteem the Church that has been to me so kind a foster-mother. Under God, I owe everything to her. She took me when a boy, and has made me what I am, and now I feel that she could do infinitely better

without me than I could without her. Flattering offers have tempted me away from her altars, but I “prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy.” I have written to inspire the same regard for her in the hearts of her members and probationers.

We have preached and written so much against exclusiveness, that our people are in danger from the opposite extreme. There is growing up among us a morbid sentiment of liberality and latitudinarianism that renders us afraid to preach our doctrines, to defend our system, and to cling to our peculiarities—afraid of offending others, who are certainly not afraid of offending us. There is too much of this foolish yielding to others, and tacitly acknowledging their superiority. We need a ministry and membership full of deep affection for Methodism, thoroughly acquainted and fully satisfied with her institutions, and bold and fearless in her defence. In all this we have no reference to sectarianism, in the offensive sense of the word, for with that we have not the



least sympathy. We love Methodism because of her freedom from exclusiveness and an intolerant spirit, which are contrary to the spirit of Christianity. We are far from claiming that all true Christians are Methodists, or that ours is the only true Church of Christ. With a brotherly regard for all true believers, we hail the various orthodox denominations as sister Churches, and departments of the great army—Christ's militant host. This is our position. Let it not be mistaken nor misrepresented, while we urge Methodists to be true to their own Church. There is a great want of a careful study of our entire system and history; hence there exist feverish desires for change. We need but few if any changes. Our wants are spiritual. Methodism is designed for a holy people, and suits no other. Let our changes be in this direction. Spiritual declension will inevitably change and modify our system. Dr. Rosser has written well on this subject. He says :

“Our ecclesiastical government, in all its fundamental regulations, is constituted sufficiently broad and deep for the development of the whole experimental and practical power of the gospel; containing the same requisitions that are made in the Bible, and invested with all that is required to accomplish the great work of the Church of God. In these respects, Methodism needs no improvement. Stand here—stand firmly. If there is spiritual declension in the Church anywhere and to any extent, stand by the good old constitution—change not that, in any essential particular, which is now in harmony with the gospel, and is all we want as a guide and rule. Follow the guide; mind the rule. If one must go down, let it be the corrupt part of the Church, not the constitution. If one must suffer, let it be the delinquent and disobedient, not our wholesome and immutable laws. If we decline, let it be in numbers, not in graces, nor in our regard for the principles of truth. If change must come for

the worse, let it be in the worldly portion of the Church, and not in the spirituality, purity, and wisdom of our constitution. Let us dwindle almost to disappearance from the earth, if it must be, like the Church in the ark, or the 'seven thousand' among the mountains of rebellious Israel, or the 'few names in Sardis whose garments were unspotted,' rather than change our constitution, and fill the world with the glory of a worldly greatness, and load the atmosphere with moral death. Let but a few, if no more, stand by the old ship, with its anchor clinched in the eternal rocks, and the time of revival and enlargement shall come, and 'the glory of the latter house shall be greater than that of the former,' and it will be infinitely better then to have the same old constitution to greet and bless the Church, as it has blessed us, than to subject a regenerated posterity to the painful necessity of restoring what we had taken away, of removing what we had added, and of repairing what we had mutilated."

## APPENDIX.

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A FORM TO BE USED IN THE RECEPTION OF  
PERSONS INTO FULL CONNECTION.



## APPENDIX.

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### A FORM TO BE USED IN THE RECEPTION OF PERSONS INTO FULL CONNECTION.

THE preacher in charge should previously satisfy himself that the candidates have been six months on trial, and “are recommended by a leader with whom they have met in class.”

At the time appointed, let him read their names, and, as they surround the altar, the congregation may rise and sing hymn 828, beginning,

“Come, let us use the grace Divine,  
And all with one accord,  
In a perpetual covenant, join  
Ourselves to Christ the Lord.”

The minister may then address the candidates on this wise:

Dearly beloved, you are present to be received into full connection in the Church of Christ. Membership in the Church is a high and sacred privilege, and should be greatly esteemed. It is an elevated position of great honor and vast responsibility. “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God

than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." This is a sacred enclosure, into which none should presume to enter without the purest motives and the best intentions. No worldly desires should ever be permitted to lead us into the Church of God, who is the searcher of all hearts. But with humility and confidence you may approach the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls to seek protection under his care. The Church is his fold, and we are the sheep of his pasture. Do not therefore expect the Church to save you; it cannot save; it only leads you to Christ, the sole and sufficient Saviour.

And now, dearly beloved, consider the relation you are about to assume. You are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. You are to become soldiers in the great army of Jesus, and laborers in the Lord's vineyard. You are now present solemnly and publicly to choose the Lord Jesus to be your Prophet, Priest, and King, and to take the vows of a holy life upon you. Will you proceed? If so, answer audibly and distinctly the following questions:

1. Have you been baptized?

Answer. *I have.* (If not, let the minister proceed to baptize them.)

2. Do you believe the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, and of the Church, so far as you understand them?

Ans. *I do.*

3. Do you renounce the devil, and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous

desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that you will not follow or be led by them?

Ans. *I renounce them all.*

4. Will you then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life?

Ans. *I will endeavor so to do, God being my helper.*

5. Will you then carefully observe the rules and regulations of the Church, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy and grace?

Ans. *I will, the Lord assisting me.*

The pastor shall then give each one the right hand of fellowship, saying,

In the name of the Church of Christ I welcome you into full connection with us, and pray that you may at last be welcomed into heaven.

Then, turning to the members of the Church, he shall say :

Beloved brethren ! you have seen how these persons have witnessed a good profession this day, and have taken the solemn vows and responsibilities of Church-membership. I therefore charge you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, that you receive them, and love them with pure hearts fervently, that you give them a place in your prayers to God, that you be ever ready to sympathize with, to encourage, and to aid them in every possible way as far as in you lieth, and that you entreat them in all respects as a mother doth her children, both by precept and example leading them in the way to heaven.



The Lord bless you and keep you: the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

NOTE.—Let the probationers take this book with them when they are to be received into full connection, and have this Form before them during the ceremony. The minister may omit the singing, if he see proper to do so. There is no particular Form prescribed by authority, and this is only offered to the consideration and for the convenience of brethren in the ministry, and for the benefit of probationers, who are often ignorant of what they have to answer, or what is expected of them.

THE END.

